

PARALLEL CAMPAIGNS: THE BRITISH IN MESOPOTAMIA, 1914-1920  
AND THE UNITED STATES IN IRAQ, 2003-2004.

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

PARALLEL CAMPAIGNS: THE BRITISH IN MESOPOTAMIA, 1914-1920 AND THE UNITED STATES IN IRAQ, 2003-2004, by Major Michael Andrew Kappelmann, 152 pages.

The Mesopotamia Campaign of World War I and Operation Iraqi Freedom of the Global War on Terrorism took place on the same geographic and human terrain. Though separated by nearly a century, a significant number of points of comparison are evident, particularly with regard to strategic and operational missteps. In both cases Western armies successfully invaded and occupied the present-day region of Iraq, and both armies suffered the effects of difficult insurgencies in the wake of their conventional campaigns. This thesis explores parallel mistakes committed by the political and military leadership of each operation in order to determine what aspects of the Mesopotamia Campaign might have provided useful precedents to the planners of Operation Iraqi Freedom. These comparable operations suggest an argument for studying history during the formulation of strategy and the design of supporting campaigns. If the American leadership had closely examined the earlier British encounter in Iraq, then it may have been able to avoid repeating some of that operation's costly and deadly aspects.

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## ACRONYMS

1/7	1st Battalion, 7th Marines
AD	Armored Division
APOC	Anglo-British Petroleum Company
ASP	Ammunition Supply Point
CJTF-7	Combined Joint Task Force Seven
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
ICDC	Iraqi Civil Defense Corps
ID	Infantry Division
IGC	Interim Governing Council
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IEF D	Indian Expeditionary Force “D”
GWOT	Global War on Terror
MEF	Marine Expeditionary Force
MEU	Marine Expeditionary Unit
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
SFG	Special Forces Group
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

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## CHAPTER 1

### ARMIES OF LIBERATION

Our armies do not come into your cities and lands as conquerors or enemies, but as liberators. Since the days of Halaka, your city and your lands have been subject to the tyranny of strangers, your palaces have fallen into ruins, your gardens have sunk in desolation, and your forefathers and you have groaned in bondage. Your sons have been carried off to wars not of your seeking; your wealth has been stripped from you by unjust men and squandered in distant places.<sup>1</sup>

—Lieutenant General Sir Stanley Maude, *The Proclamation of Baghdad*

In a free Iraq, there will be no more wars of aggression against your neighbors, no more poison factories, no more executions of dissidents, no more torture chambers and rape rooms. The tyrant will soon be gone. The day of your liberation is near.<sup>2</sup>

—President George W. Bush, “War Ultimatum Speech”

The above quotations reflect the narratives of two Western campaigns, separated by nearly a century but executed on almost the same physical and human terrain. The British, during the Mesopotamian Campaign, and the American-led coalition of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) both portrayed themselves as armies of liberation and expected the gratitude and cooperation of the Iraqi people. However, in each case those people greeted their occupiers with distrust and eventually outright hostility. Deadly insurgencies erupted, and for both Western militaries, winning the peace proved costly and difficult. During the initial phases of OIF, I was a lieutenant, serving at the tactical level of war, and I had no role in planning the campaign. However, I was as guilty as any strategic or operational planner of having glowing assumptions about how the Iraqis would receive us. Two personal stories account for how I came to acknowledge this.

### August 2003: Valley of Peace

I was a UH-1N Huey utility helicopter pilot with I Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) during the invasion and initial stability phases of OIF.<sup>3</sup> On 21 August 2003, I was a copilot in a section of two UH-1Ns in support of 1st Battalion, 7th Marines (1/7), which had responsibility for security at the Shi'a holy city of Najaf.<sup>4</sup> I remember the date because insurgents in Baghdad had bombed the UN Headquarters two days before.<sup>5</sup> We had landed at one of 1/7's forward operating bases (and picked up an infantry lieutenant whom we were to fly on reconnaissance of key terrain in the city and a large ammunition supply point (ASP) that lay out in the desert to the west. By Iraqi standards, most of Najaf appeared modern from the air, with multi-storied buildings and streets at right angles to one another. The southwest portion was the Old City, situated on a ridgeline overlooking a dry lake bed. It was walled and designed roughly in concentric circles, at the heart of which was the golden-domed Imam Ali Mosque, the third holiest site in the world for the followers of Shi'a Islam.<sup>6</sup> Sprawling to the north of the Old City was the *Wadi al-Salaam*, or "Valley of Peace," one of the largest cemeteries in the world and final resting place for millions of Shi'a Muslims.<sup>7</sup>



Figure 1. Surface View of the *Wadi al-Salaam* from the North

*Source:* NBC News, “Iraq’s Valley of Peace,” 10 July 2007, [http://worldblog.nbcnews.com/\\_nv/more/section/archive?date=2007/7](http://worldblog.nbcnews.com/_nv/more/section/archive?date=2007/7) (accessed 13 January 2013). The Old city and Imam Ali Mosque are pictured in the right background.

The lieutenant on board was apprising us of the situation in Najaf. Spanish and Central American forces would be arriving soon to relieve the Marines in this city. The problem 1/7 faced for its remaining time was mostly criminal element, in particular scrappers who would raid the ASP for metal and explosives. The latest bombing in Baghdad had some intelligence analysts concerned that Shi’a criminals were selling such materials to Sunni insurgents, who were in turn manufacturing improvised explosive devices (IEDs) with which to attack the coalition. Such attacks had not been occurring regularly in the Shi’a areas of Iraq, where the Marines were assigned security, but they were increasing in Sunni Arab areas: mainly the Baghdad, Anbar, and Diyala Provinces. ASPs, such as the one west of Najaf, were all across Iraq, and the coalition simply did not

have the manpower to provide adequate security. This was why 1/7 had requested aviation support.

Our section was crossing north of the Old City, above the *Wadi al-Salaam*, when a pilot in the other aircraft made a radio report, something about a man waving a flag. The pilot-in-command, our section leader, acknowledged him, but I ignored it and continued to listen to the lieutenant. The flight out to the ASP took about five minutes. It was huge, easily two square miles across, with hundreds of bunkers stocked with all manner of ordnance and no security except at the front gate. At one point we spotted a couple of civilian cars driving away from the north boundary, well away from any roads. The lieutenant called in the position and a description of the vehicles for a ground patrol to intercept them, but the rules of engagement did not allow us to take further action.

Later, during our section debrief at Kut, the pilot-in-command of the other helicopter again brought up what he had seen in the Old City. A man of military age was standing on the roof of a two-story building, looking up at our flight while waving a green flag attached to a pole that was approximately eight-feet long. He appeared to be intently signaling to others about us, perhaps the direction of our flight or the mere fact that we were on station.<sup>8</sup> The section leader listened, but I expressed doubts based on assumptions that fit my narrative; I did this despite the fact that I was a junior copilot and had not even observed the event in question. The truth as I knew it was this: Unlike the Sunni, who lost political power when the coalition overthrew the Ba'athist regime of Saddam Hussein, the Shi'a Arabs were grateful to us for liberating them. Najaf was a Shi'a city. Therefore, whatever it was meant nothing. The other pilot was annoyed at my

condescending tone and evenly reminded me that I had not seen it. I do not know if the section leader reported our flight's observations to the intelligence cell.

Six days later, a major bombing occurred at the gates of the Imam Ali Mosque, killing the Shi'a leader, Ayatollah Mohammad Baqir al-Hakim, and 123 others at the end of afternoon prayers.<sup>9</sup> It was the deadliest single attack on civilians since OIF began in March. In the days that followed, Shi'a militias formed and took responsibility for security at holy sites, and the coalition delayed the transfer of authority from 1/7 to the Spanish and Central American forces until 23 September.<sup>10</sup> Along with 1/7, my squadron departed Iraq soon after that. We were among the last Marines to leave, and most of us assumed that the Marines' role in OIF was at an end. Over the next months, Shi'a Arabs, under the leadership of cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, grew progressively dissatisfied with the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and became increasingly violent. By the spring of 2004, the coalition was facing a full-scale rebellion, involving not only former Ba'athists, but also factions of al-Qaeda and the Shi'a *Jaysh al-Mahdi* (JAM)<sup>11</sup> led by al-Sadr.

#### August 2004: Valley of War

One year and a few days after my first flight around Najaf, I was again over the *Wadi al-Salaam*. I had returned to Iraq the previous month. This time however, the circumstances and human terrain were vastly different. The "Valley of Peace" was an ironic name for the site of the most intense battle in which I have ever personally participated.<sup>12</sup> The JAM had seized control of the Old City and most of the cemetery, turning mausoleums into stone fortresses. The 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), reinforced by U.S. Army 1-5 and 2-7 Cavalry, had been clearing the cemetery from north

to south over the past few weeks, had penetrated the Old City, and was closing in on the final JAM positions in the Imam Ali Mosque.



Figure 2. Aerial View of Rotary Wing Close Air Support in the *Wadi al-Salaam*

*Source:* This photograph was captured by Major Glen Butler, USMC, from a UH-1N flying on the wing of the pictured AH-1W. See Francis X. Kozlowski, *U.S. Marines in Battle: An-Najaf, August 2004*, U.S. Marine Corps History Division, [http://www.marines.mil/Portals/59/Publications/U.S.%20Marines%20in%20Battle\\_An-Najaf%20%20PCN%2010600000600\\_1.pdf](http://www.marines.mil/Portals/59/Publications/U.S.%20Marines%20in%20Battle_An-Najaf%20%20PCN%2010600000600_1.pdf) (accessed 17 January 2013), 27. An AH-1W over the *Wadi al-Salaam* striking an enemy mortar position in a fortified mausoleum with a TOW missile. The golden dome of the Imam Ali Mosque is visible in the background.

On that morning, I was in a section with an AH-1W Cobra attack helicopter in support of elements of 1-5 who were engaged with enemy fighters in a building adjacent to the Imam Ali Mosque.<sup>13</sup> Close air support in the urban environment is terribly unforgiving of error, and this was a particularly stressful attack for me: U.S. soldiers were



just to the left of the target, and the mosque, which was not to be damaged under any circumstances, was to its right. The battlefield geometry was so tight at this point in the battle that the 11th MEU was no longer firing its organic artillery. Furthermore, rockets fired from a UH-1N can be notoriously inaccurate, and despite much practice over the last few weeks I was not very confident in my ability to strike a target in this environment. For those reasons, I had been deliberately holding on to the seven rockets I had on board. The crew chiefs continued to engage the JAM with their door guns. However, at this point in the mission, the AH-1W had expended its load of rockets and missiles, and the soldier controlling us over the radio was shouting above the sound of gunfire and explosions for whatever support we could still give to aid his maneuver. Our relief section was not yet on station.

Following the lead AH-1W, which was shooting its remaining 20mm ammunition to cover our approach, I maneuvered the aircraft into a steep attack dive. The sky filled with red and green tracers in the direction of our flight, but my thoughts were only of how I could not afford to miss, as I had many times during training. When the rockets hit the target building, I had the feeling of a kid used to dropping passes who had just caught a game-winning touchdown. I was so fixated on watching the impacts that my copilot had to remind me to pull off from the target. Later I learned that 1-5 successfully seized the building.



Figure 3. Surface View of Rotary Wing Close Air Support in Najaf

*Source:* China Daily News, “Militants Kidnap Iranian Diplomat in Iraq,” 8 August 2004, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2004-08/09/content\\_363323.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2004-08/09/content_363323.htm) (accessed 15 January 2013). A UH-1N fires 2.75” high-explosive rockets in Najaf, covering the pull-off of the lead AH-1W (below). These fires are in support of elements of Battalion Landing Team (BLT) 1/4, 11th MEU, on 8 August 2004.

That was the last day of the battle. The final assault on the mosque, to be led by nascent elements of Iraqi security forces, was in the final stages of preparation, but Ayatolla Ali al-Sistani, who had been in London for medical treatment, returned and negotiated a cease fire before this was necessary.<sup>14</sup>

A few months after this battle, I first learned of the Mesopotamian Campaign from World War I. I was studying Iraqi Arabic and came across the name of General Stanley Maude in one of the practice sentences. I researched Maude and the role Britain played in the creation of the modern Iraqi state. I was struck by parallels between the two campaigns. In addition to taking place on the same ground, both operations were launched in support of larger war efforts: World War I in the case of the British and the

Global War on Terror (GWOT) for the Americans. However, both campaigns arguably served as distractions from these larger war efforts, diverting critical personnel and resources away from what was (or perhaps should have been) the national objectives. The campaigns themselves arguably suffered from a lack of resources and manpower, suggesting a false sense of urgency by political and military planners. Further, as discussed above, planners appear to have assumed that the population would not object to and would even welcome foreign occupation and governance. In each case, agitation and insurgency began to fester soon in the aftermath, followed by large-scale rebellions in 1920 and 2004, respectively.

Of course, parallels are not difficult to identify in retrospect and are not necessarily useful in and of themselves to the military planner. These remarkable similarities however, seem to suggest a lack of historical understanding at the strategic and operational levels prior to OIF. Failure to study regional histories until after the fact has become a part of the American way of war almost to the point of cliché. The Chinese entry into the Korean War is such an example. Even the briefest survey of Korean military history would have revealed that the Chinese have always intervened in Korean conflicts whenever a foreign power approached the Yalu River, such as they did against the Japanese in 1592.<sup>15</sup>

In the case of Iraq, I believe a study of the British experiences would have aided coalition political leaders and military planners in avoiding what now seem to be obvious mistakes. For myself, I often think back to my first flight over Najaf in August 2003 and the man our flight spotted waving a flag. It may have meant nothing. However, I might not have been so quick to dismiss the possibility of a Shi'a uprising if I had understood

that it had happened before under very similar circumstances. Personnel at all levels may have paid more attention to such details that could have given us indications and warnings of such a rebellion brewing in our midst. As much as my experiences in Najaf shaped me personally and professionally, the Army and Marine Corps efforts and losses during the rebellion of 2004 might have been unnecessary if we had only been more prepared.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine what factors of the British experience could have aided the planners of OIF in their design of the campaign and post-war administration. Chapter 2 summarizes the British experience in Iraq during the conventional campaign of 1914-1918. Chapter 3 describes events from the end of World War I to the investiture of King Feisal in 1921, focusing on the rise and suppression of the 1920 revolt. Chapter 4 summarizes elements of OIF from the conventional campaign of 2003 to the end of the Iraqi national uprising in June 2004. Finally, chapter 5 analyzes in detail those key parallels of strategic and operational importance, including erroneous assumptions about the good will and long-term gratitude of the Iraqi people toward foreign invaders.

### Historiography

Several good books are available on the World War I Mesopotamian Campaign. A. J. Barker's work, *The First Iraq War*, is a comprehensive examination of military aspects of the campaign.<sup>16</sup> It gives detailed accounts on orders of battle, maneuvers, and tactical results. Charles Townshend's *Desert Hell* covers the same subject area but focuses more on the strategic and political issues governing the campaign and its aftermath.<sup>17</sup> *Kut 1916* by Patrick Crowley describes in more detail the military events

between November 1914 when British forces first invaded Mesopotamia and April 1916 when the 6th (Poona) Division of the British Indian Army surrendered to Ottoman forces at Kut. This thesis draws from all three secondary sources. Primary sources include a report by Gertrude Bell to London on the background of the conventional campaign and state of the administration.<sup>18</sup>

Fewer sources are available on the 1920 revolt against the British. *Desert Hell* has a chapter on the rebellion and two more on British actions to establish a semi-independent monarchy and functional Iraqi army. Bell's report discusses some of the underlying issues at the end of World War I and early outbreaks of violence. General Sir Aylmer Haldane's book, *The Insurrection in Mesopotamia* is well researched in terms of facts, figures, and dates.<sup>19</sup> It provides the primary account from the British military perspective. A *Clash of Loyalties* by Sir Arnold Wilson does much the same from the point of view of the British civil administration. This thesis also borrows heavily from journal articles, such as Amal Vinogradov's "The 1920 Revolt in Iraq Reconsidered."<sup>20</sup> Toby Dodge's *Inventing Iraq* is important for comprehension of the nature and evolution of Britain's mandate system in Iraq.<sup>21</sup> Finally, Ibrahim al-Marashi and Sammy Salama wrote *Iraq's Armed Forces*,<sup>22</sup> which is necessary reading to understand the creation of a national army in Iraq following the rebellion; how the armed forces evolved from a colonial force that served at the pleasure of the British, to a totalitarian-penetration model that served at the pleasure of Hussein; and, importantly, OIF from the perspective of the Iraqi military leadership.

The subject matter of OIF has no shortage of books about the conventional campaign and the long insurgency that followed. This thesis primarily draws from *Cobra*

*II* by Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor on matters related to the conventional campaign and its immediate aftermath.<sup>23</sup> *Fiasco* by Tom Ricks provides insight into early failures of the CPA and Combined Joint Task Force Seven (CJTF-7) that contributed to the 2004 uprising.<sup>24</sup> Where possible, this thesis draws directly from primary sources, such as the *National Security Strategy*, legislative acts, United Nations (UN) Security Council resolutions, CPA orders, and reports to the U.S. Congress.

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<sup>1</sup>Portion of General Maude's proclamation to the inhabitants of Baghdad shortly after its occupation by Commonwealth forces. Lieutenant General Sir Stanley Maude, *The Proclamation of Baghdad*, World War I Document Archive, 19 March 1917, [http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/The\\_Proclamation\\_of\\_Baghdad](http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/The_Proclamation_of_Baghdad) (accessed 5 January 2013).

<sup>2</sup>Portion of President Bush's war ultimatum speech directed at the Iraqi people. President George W. Bush, "A Transcript of George Bush's War Ultimatum Speech from the Cross Hall in the White House," *The Guardian*, 17 March 2003, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/mar/18/usa.iraq> (accessed 5 January 2013).

<sup>3</sup>The UH-1N is a utility helicopter employed by the Marine Corps in a variety of roles. During the invasion phase (March-April 2003), its missions mostly consisted of aerial reconnaissance and light lift in support of regimental, division, and MEF headquarters. During the follow-on stability phases, its primary task was close air support, usually while paired up with an AH-1W attack helicopter. For a detailed discussion of UH-1N capabilities and limitations, see U.S. Navy Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR), NAVAIR 01-110HCE-1, *NATOPS Flight Manual, Navy Model UH/HH-1N Helicopter* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1 April 2001); Office of the Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV), A/NTTP 3-22.3-UH1, *Combat Aircraft Fundamentals, UH-1* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, March 2011).

<sup>4</sup>Frank G. Hoffman, *Changing Tires on the Fly: Marines and Postconflict Stability Ops* (Philadelphia, PA: Foreign Policy Research Institute, September 2006), 8.

<sup>5</sup>The blast, attributed to a car bomb, killed over 20 people, including top UN envoy in Iraq Sergio Vieira de Mello, and injured over 70 more. Yacoub N. Sameer, "Car Bomb Rocks United Nations Headquarters in Baghdad; Dozens Wounded," *The Canadian Press*, 19 August 2003.

<sup>6</sup>The mosque is the burial shrine of Ali ibn Ali Talib, the fourth Caliph to succeed the Prophet Muhammad, according to Sunni Muslims, and the first Caliph to Shi'a Muslims. Dispute over the role of Ali is one of the prime causes of the schism between

Sunni and Shi'a. Aylmer Haldane, *The Insurrection in Mesopotamia 1920* (London, UK: Imperial War Museum, Department of Printed Books, 1922), 176-177.

<sup>7</sup>Shi'a Muslims from all over the world, not just Iraq, come to Najaf to bury and visit family here. Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Major John Bancroft, USMCR, e-mail to author, 10 January 2013. This statement was generously written at my request. Major Bancroft was the pilot-in-command of the other aircraft whom I rudely challenged during the debrief.

<sup>9</sup>Ben Wederman, "Najaf Bombing Kills Shiite Leader, Followers Say," CNN.com, 30 August 2003, <http://edition.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/08/29/sprj.irq.najaf/> (accessed 5 January 2013).

<sup>10</sup>David Bennett, "Marines in Southern Iraq Hand Over Reins to Spanish," MilitaryInfo.com, 24 September 2003, [http://www.militaryinfo.com/news\\_story?textnewsid=555](http://www.militaryinfo.com/news_story?textnewsid=555) (accessed 5 January 2013).

<sup>11</sup>*Jaysh al-Mahdi*, literally Army of the Mahdi (an Islamic Messianic figure); from Leslie Bayless, "Who is Muqtada al-Sadr?" *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 35, no. 2 (2012): 136.

<sup>12</sup>For a comprehensive narrative of this battle, see Dick Camp, *Battle for the City of the Dead: In the Shadow of the Golden Dome, Najaf, August 2004* (Minneapolis, MN: Zenith Press, 2011).

<sup>13</sup>The AH-1W was the primary attack helicopter for the Marine Corps in 2004. For a discussion of UH-1 and AH-1 integration during combat operations, see SECNAV, *Combat Aircraft Fundamentals, UH-1*. Events here depicted in Personal Award Recommendation for Captain Michael A. Kappelmann, approved as Individual Air Medal with Combat Distinguishing Device on February 22, 2005. Capt Troy Schillinger, the designated section leader and pilot-in-command of the AH-1W, is the author of the summary of action. Roy Schillinger, "Personal Award Recommendation for Captain Michael A. Kappelmann, approved as Individual Air Medal with Combat Distinguishing Device on February 22, 2005," USMC Improved Awards Processing System, <http://www.manpower.usmc.mil/iaps> (accessed 5 January 2013).

<sup>14</sup>Anne Barnard, "Sistani, Sadr Negotiate a Truce in Najaf," *The Boston Globe*, 27 August 2004, [http://www.boston.com/news/world/articles/2004/08/27/sistani\\_sadr\\_negotiate\\_a\\_truce\\_in\\_najaf/](http://www.boston.com/news/world/articles/2004/08/27/sistani_sadr_negotiate_a_truce_in_najaf/) (accessed 6 January 2013).

<sup>15</sup>Karl Eichenberry, "The Imjin War," *Military Review* 68, no. 2 (February 1988): 74-82.

<sup>16</sup>A. J. Barker, *The First Iraq War* (New York: Enigma Books, 2009), 24-25.

<sup>17</sup>Charles Townshend, *Desert Hell: The British Invasion of Mesopotamia* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), Kindle Version, 2011.

<sup>18</sup>Gertrude Bell, *Review of the Civil Administration of Mesopotamia* (London, UK: His Majesty's Stationery Office, December 1920).

<sup>19</sup>Sir Aylmer Haldane, *The Insurrection in Mesopotamia 1920* (London, UK: Imperial War Museum, Department of Printed Books, 1922).

<sup>20</sup>Amal Vinogradov, "The 1920 Revolt in Iraq Reconsidered: The Role of Tribes in National Politics," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 3, no. 2 (April 1972): 123-139.

<sup>21</sup>Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

<sup>22</sup>Ibrahim al-Marashi and Sammy Salama, *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>23</sup>Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006), Kindle Version, 2011.

<sup>24</sup>Tom Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006).



## CHAPTER 2

### THE MESOPOTAMIAN CAMPAIGN

One of the unanticipated consequences of World War I was the creation of the state of Iraq, more or less along its present borders. The Ottoman Empire, as it existed on the eve of war in 1914, consisted of present-day Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Iraq, and portions of the Caucasus and Arabian Peninsula. The area we now call Iraq was three provinces, or *vilayets*, of the Empire: Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul. The British in those days referred to the region by its ancient Greek name, Mesopotamia, or “land between the rivers.” The British political and military leadership established early campaign objectives designed to support the overall strategic goals of the Great War.

This chapter summarizes the conventional campaign that captured Iraq between 1914 and 1918. The Ottoman Empire began the war as a neutral power, but the British proceeded with the assumption that the Ottomans would inevitably join the Central Powers and treated them with some measure of hostility. This combined with German financial incentives and common goals persuaded the Ottomans to join the Central Powers in November 1914. The British responded almost immediately by seizing most of the Ottoman territory in the vicinity of Basra in order to protect their petroleum resources in the Persian Gulf. The relative ease of this operation as well as setbacks in other theaters encouraged an ill-advised and under-resourced expedition toward Baghdad that resulted in the defeat and capture of an entire division in 1916. In the wake of this disaster, the British regrouped and successfully captured Baghdad the following year, then advanced as far as Mosul before an armistice went into effect in late 1918.

### Ottoman Entry into the Great War

The Ottoman Empire chose to formally join with the Central Powers in November 1914; two months after hostilities had begun in Europe, as a consequence of both German entreaties and provocative actions by the British. The Ottoman and German Empires had been building economic and military ties in the years before entering into a military alliance. In the early period of his rule, Kaiser Wilhelm II visited the Ottoman Empire, established a trade agreement, and set up a German syndicate to build railroads.<sup>1</sup> Also, for years Germany had been selling modern weaponry to the Ottomans and providing them with army advisors, including a renewed military mission in the spring of 1913.<sup>2</sup> The Triple Entente powers viewed the Ottoman-German relationship with suspicion. Russia for its part had designs on the Dardanelles and other Ottoman territories, and Britain felt it was being pushed out as the traditional protector of Ottoman integrity, a role it had held since the Crimean War. Further, British strategic interests, primarily the Suez Canal and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC) refinery at Abadan, were located not far from Ottoman borders.

In the opening days of the war, Britain took the first step in establishing an acrimonious relationship by confiscating two Ottoman warships being built in British yards.<sup>3</sup> The Ottomans had contracted for a battleship, which they called *Reshadieh*, in December 1911, and they purchased a second that was already under construction, named *Sultan Osman I*, in December 1913. The cost of these ships placed an enormous burden on the Ottoman treasury, and the government solicited donations from across the Empire to pay for them. Ottoman crews were scheduled to take control of the ships in August 1914, but war broke out first. First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill ordered the

ships to be confiscated lest they be used against the British fleet in the days ahead.<sup>4</sup> He did this without clear evidence that the Ottomans intended war and understanding full well it would cause tremendous outrage across their empire. The British made half-hearted gestures at monetary compensation, but the Ottomans ignored them.

Days later, Ottoman authorities gave sanctuary to two German warships being pursued by a vastly larger Allied fleet, further supporting the British notion that war with the Ottoman Empire was inevitable. The battlecruiser *Goeben* and light cruiser *Breslau*, commanded by Admiral Wilhelm Souchon, managed to evade British and French warships in the Mediterranean Sea and safely docked at the port of Istanbul on 10 August.<sup>5</sup> The British protested this as an Ottoman violation of its own neutrality and deployed warships to both the Eastern Mediterranean and Persian Gulf. In response, the Ottomans rescinded their maritime agreement with the British on 15 August, absorbed the German ships and crews into the Ottoman Navy on the 16th, and closed the Dardanelles to all shipping and began to lay mines at the entrance on the 27th.<sup>6</sup> This last decision would have terrible consequences for Russia, which would be rendered unable to trade excess foodstuffs for munitions and other strategic materials with its Western Allies.

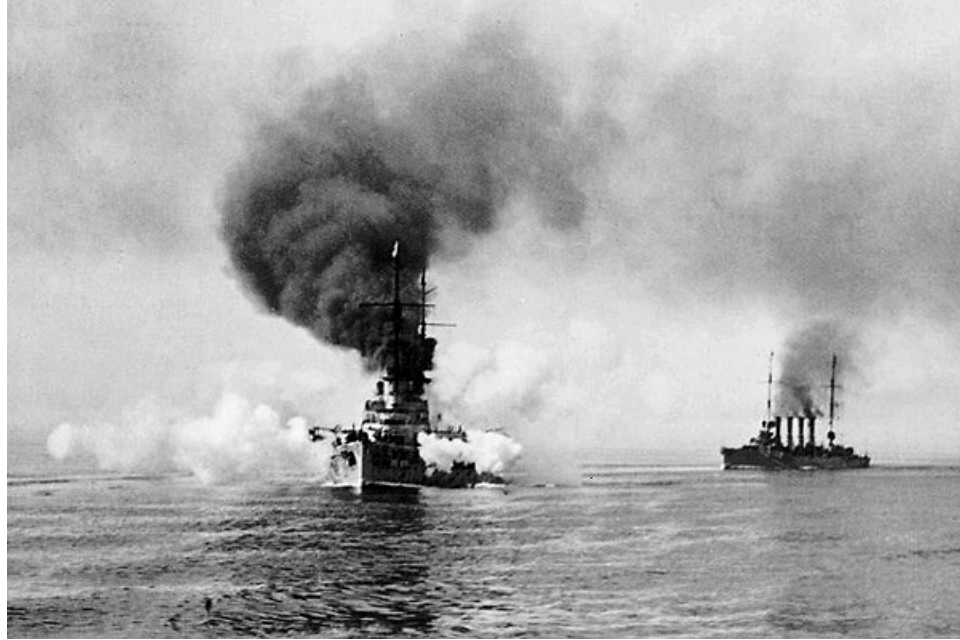


Figure 4. German Warships *Goeben* and *Breslau* at the Dardanelles, August 1914

*Source:* City of Art, “Turkish Battlecruiser Yavuz Sultan Selim,” Cityofart.net, [http://www.cityofart.net/bship/turc\\_yavuz.html](http://www.cityofart.net/bship/turc_yavuz.html) (accessed 18 March 2013). The German warships *Goeben* and *Breslau* entering the Dardanelles on 10 August 1914. This event was a significant contributing factor to the entry of the Ottoman Turks into World War I and the creation of the modern state of Iraq.

Germany increased pressure on the Ottoman Empire to join the Central Powers following a number of setbacks in Europe. Initially, German interests involved keeping the Ottomans at a neutral posture for economic reasons as well as a low estimation of the capabilities of their armed forces.<sup>7</sup> The Germans and Ottomans signed a secret treaty on 2 August, but it mostly centered on a common defense against Russia, without mention of the other Allies.<sup>8</sup> However, German plans for a quick decision in Europe ended with major defeats in Galicia and Bukovina in August and at the Marne from 6-10 September.<sup>9</sup> The Central Powers were then faced with a long war on two fronts, and the Ottoman ability to tie down British and Russian troops in remote regions from Europe

suddenly made Ottoman contributions invaluable. Political pressure mounted on a divided Ottoman government to join the war. On one hand, the strategic aims of the Central Powers were consistent with Ottoman goals of protecting the Dardanelles and recovering lost territories in the Caucasus. On the other hand, the Ottoman military, industry, and treasury were woefully unprepared for a war on this scale.

An Ottoman naval attack on the Russian Black Sea fleet removed the final decision on war from the politicians. On 19 October, an Ottoman fleet, including *Goeben* and *Breslau*, departed Istanbul under the command of Admiral Souchon, who was now appointed the senior officer in the Ottoman Navy. Without the permission of the full civil government, these ships attacked Russian merchant and naval vessels and bombarded the ports of Sevastopol, Odessa, and Novorossiysk over the next 10 days.<sup>10</sup> The non-interventionists in the Ottoman cabinet were furious, and some resigned in protest. Despite conciliatory gestures by the Ottoman government, Russia declared war on 2 November with the British and French following suit three days later.

### British Initial Victories

From November 1914 to April 1915, British and Indian forces campaigned in southern Mesopotamia with a small footprint and limited objectives. In the weeks preceding the declaration of war British leadership recognized that Ottoman forces posed a potential threat to oil resources in the Persian Gulf. If the APOC refinery at Abadan Island was captured or the pipeline to it interrupted, then the Royal Navy would be starved of fuel until another source could be secured. British intelligence received a number of reports (later discovered to be erroneous) that seemed to confirm this fear, including a buildup of troops and weapons in the Basra area, and most alarmingly, the

presence of German advisors.<sup>11</sup> As early as mid-September, British naval vessels arrived off the Shatt al-Arab to patrol the potential sea approaches to Abadan. Further planning began to put ground combat forces ashore near Basra in order to prevent the Ottomans from having a port of debarkation from which to seize Abadan and from having a staging area for ground operations into Persia against the pipeline. On 16 October, the 6th (Poona) Division of the British Indian Army departed from the port of Bombay (present-day Mumbai).<sup>12</sup> Its destination was supposedly France via Suez to join the British Expeditionary Force on the Western Front. However, once at sea the commander of the 16th Indian Brigade opened sealed orders that diverted his command and the battleship HMS Ocean to Bahrain in order to be prepared to establish a beachhead in southern Mesopotamia. The brigade orders were to occupy Abadan Island with the purpose of securing the APOC refinery, tanks, and pipeline; covering the landing of reinforcements (the remainder of the 6th Division) should they be required; and assuring the local Arabs of British support against the Ottoman Turks.<sup>13</sup> The commander quickly realized that from Abadan alone he could not protect the APOC pipeline, which extended over one hundred miles into mainland Persia. Meeting this objective would require an expedition inland.

On 6 November, one day after the formal British declaration of war, the Mesopotamian Campaign began with an amphibious landing on the Al Faw Peninsula. The advanced element consisted of 600 personnel, including marines from *Ocean* and a few light artillery pieces.<sup>14</sup> Despite Ottoman forces in the region having upwards of 5,000 men at arms, the British landing was virtually unopposed.<sup>15</sup> The full 16th Brigade was ashore by the afternoon of the next day, and with fire support from the shallow-draft gun

sloop HMS Odin, Fao Fortress, the only source of any resistance, fell to the invaders.<sup>16</sup> Resistance remained light, relative to other fronts, and by 17 November the 6th Division headquarters was ashore along with the 18th Brigade.<sup>17</sup> This task force became known as Indian Expedition Force “D” (IEF D). Elements advancing toward Basra received a delegation from the city: the Ottoman defenders had fled, and the city of 60,000 was erupting in chaos and looting. IEF D marched unopposed into Basra on the 21st and received its formal surrender two days later.<sup>18</sup> Thus far, the campaign had exceeded expectations in London and India.



Figure 5. *Cadmus*-class Gun Sloop HMS Odin

*Source:* Cranston Fine Arts, “Cadmus,” Worldnavalships.com, <http://www.worldnavalships.com/cadmus.htm> (accessed 19 March 2013). HMS Odin, a *Cadmus*-class gun sloop. *Odin* provided decisive fires that allowed the 16th Brigade to capture Fao Fortress and establish a beachhead, the waters of the Shatt al-Arab being too shallow for heavier warships, such as HMS Ocean. River boats played a critical role in the Mesopotamian Campaign by facilitating assault, fire, logistical, and communications support to the Army.

Two days after the fall of Basra, with serious resistance yet to materialize, IEF D advanced on Qurna, the last remaining threat to its position in southern Mesopotamia. Approximately 50 nautical miles to the north of Basra, Qurna sat on the Shatt al-Arab at the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. The Ottomans had gathered their fleeing forces there to build up for a counterattack. The British moved two battalions up river in four troop ships, supported by two gun sloops and three armed launches. Under the cover of fire support provided by the boats, the battalions were able to land, maneuver around the Ottoman garrison, and cut it off from its primary line of communication up the



Tigris. On 19 December, the entire Ottoman force, 42 officers and almost 1,000 men, surrendered and marched into British captivity.<sup>19</sup> The most likely avenue of approach to Basra was now protected.

With Qurna and Basra in hand, IEF D had achieved the campaign's stated operational objectives. With no access to the sea, the Ottomans could not mount an expedition against Abadan. Furthermore, an overland expedition into southern Persia to threaten the pipeline would have been considerably more difficult with British and Indian troops in control of the Shatt al-Arab. The Royal Navy's source of oil was mostly secure for the cheap price of a single reinforced division and a few armed boats that would have been of very little use on alternate fronts. However, instead of consolidating this victory and focusing on administration of the these conquered territories, IEF D would overextend itself and set into motion events that led to the greatest British military disaster of World War I.

#### First Advance to Baghdad

The loss of the 6th Division at Kut had its roots in a lack of supervision or control of the campaign from London, Indian government fantasies about colonization, and false hopes that exploitation of the successes to date might relieve or redeem setbacks occurring on other fronts. In April 1915, IEF D, now reinforced by the 12th Division to form a corps-strength unit, repulsed a major Ottoman attack intended to recapture Basra and cut off British forces to the north. Two regular Ottoman divisions from Nasiriyya, augmented with thousands of Arab levies, bypassed the garrison at Qurna by moving along the wetlands in small boats. On 12 April they closed with a fortified British position at Shaiba, 10 miles to the west of Basra.<sup>20</sup> Though isolated by flooding, the

British managed to hold the position and send the attacking force, the Arab irregulars in particular, to flight. This was the last time the Ottomans would threaten Basra and also represented a serious break between the indigenous Arabs and the Ottoman Turks. Following this battle, the Arab populations in the Shi'a holy cities of Najaf and Karbala began to display their tribal banners, an ancient symbol for declaring war against the civil government, in this case against the Ottomans. This rebellion spread to Kufa and Hilla, having the effect of closing the Euphrates River south of Baghdad to Ottoman forces and isolating the garrison at Nasiriyya. These events convinced the political and military leadership of the Government of India that the Ottoman hold on the rest of Mesopotamia was tenuous and that with rapid exploitation the forces already in theater could take Baghdad. In addition, apart from events at Nasiriyya, this rebellion would cause both British and Ottoman forces to cede this area to the Arabs and confine their main efforts to the Tigris River for the next two years.

With the oil secure, the War Council in London had other plans for engaging the Ottoman Empire and gave vague orders confining IEF D to operations within the Basra *vilayet*. On 25 April, British and French forces opened an amphibious campaign on the Gallipoli Peninsula in order to force open the Dardanelles and resume trade with Russia.<sup>21</sup> Ironically, the early successes of the Mesopotamian Campaign may have led British leadership to believe that Ottoman defenses would continue to be ineffective, particularly in their ability to defend beaches. A combination of poor execution, fierce resistance from some of the best units in the Ottoman Army, and the direct support of the German military resulted in a deadly stalemate at the landing sites. The Dardanelles remained closed, and Allied forces evacuated the beachheads by January 1916, having

suffered over 250,000 casualties.<sup>22</sup> London's orders confining IEF D to the Basra *vilayet* demonstrated how detached it was from operations there. This guidance clearly meant that IEF D was to more or less hold its present position and continue to protect the western flank of the APOC pipeline. The Basra *vilayet* however, extended for many miles to the north and west of the British salient at Qurna, leaving room for some interpretation.

The Government of India chose to infer tacit permission to resume offensive operations, and it authorized IEF D to advance along two axes: north toward Amara on the Tigris, and west toward Nasiriyya on the Euphrates. Mesopotamia was one of the few places in the world where British forces were having a measure of success, and officials believed that after the war was won this territory would make an excellent colony for Indian immigrants.<sup>23</sup> The climate was likely too harsh for European settlers, but it could serve to relieve population pressure in India, and properly managed, the neglected flood plains could yield magnificent crops for export. In late May 1915, the 6th Division, now under the command of Major General Sir Charles Townshend, advanced up the Tigris to capture Amara.<sup>24</sup> It did so while well under strength, with its cavalry and most of its artillery detached; also, several battalions of infantry were absent for garrison and policing duties in Qurna and Basra. Nevertheless, enemy resistance was cursory, and the city fell on 1 June, further supporting the notion that Ottoman power was collapsing in Mesopotamia. IEF D then shifted its focus west, with the 12th Division under Major General Sir George Goringe advancing on the Euphrates toward Nasiriyya, which fell on 25 July.<sup>25</sup> Again, Ottoman resistance mostly crumbled in the face of British and Indian troops. These dual operations, though successful, added approximately 60 miles to the British line of communication north and over 75 to the west. This had the effect of

splitting the available boats, on which the task force depended for fire, logistical, and communications support, and which to that point had been barely adequate for two divisions operating on shorter lines. Additionally, the available manpower became more scattered by the necessity of garrisoning these newly captured towns, and no reinforcements were authorized for this theater. IEF D was in a more vulnerable position, and the APOC pipeline was no more secure for it.

The War Council was displeased to learn that IEF D had willfully spread itself so thin, but victories were in short supply in the summer of 1915. The temptation to repeat earlier successes was irresistible, and soon after the capture of Nasiriyya Lieutenant General Sir John Nixon, commander of IEF D, requested permission to press forward to Kut, a mere four miles beyond the Basra *vilayet* border.<sup>26</sup> He argued that this action would remove a major staging point for an inevitable Ottoman counterattack and place Baghdad, the prize, within striking distance. The Government of India endorsed the plan, and London reluctantly approved it, believing it might relieve some of the pressure on the beleaguered Gallipoli Campaign. Townshend, who would lead the attack, was unenthusiastic. The logistics situation was already poor without adding 120 nautical miles of river to the line of communication. Additionally, the climate had made a staggering number of his soldiers too ill to fight. Townshend himself, had just returned to command from two months of convalescent leave in India on 27 August.<sup>27</sup> Despite Townshend's protests, Nixon ordered him to conduct the attack with the resources and manpower currently available. On 27 September, the 6th Division met an enemy of equal numbers in well prepared positions at Sin on the eastern approach to Kut.<sup>28</sup> Townshend made good use of the limited aerial and cavalry reconnaissance at his disposal and detected the

enemy defenses. Fixing them with a feint to their front and with gunboat support, the main body of the 6th Division maneuvered around the enemy and attacked south across the Tigris behind the Ottoman main lines. This caused them to break and withdraw to the west. Townshend was unable to immediately pursue, but his forces captured Kut the following day.

Again, tactical success concealed the tenuous operational situation the 6th Division was in, at the edge of a very long line of communication back to Basra, and Nixon with political approval ordered another advance to maintain contact with the withdrawing enemy forces. They pushed as far as Aziziyyah, another 70 miles upriver, before aerial scouts confirmed that the Ottoman forces had regrouped and were building defenses in the vicinity of Ctesiphon (near modern-day Salman Pak, about 20 miles southeast of Baghdad). Despite Townshend's continued protests, Nixon repeated the theme that the enemy's current position represented a threat to the recently captured objective.<sup>29</sup> A divided War Council in London reluctantly approved the decision to continue and take Baghdad if possible. With virtually no good news coming in from any front, the ministers concluded that perhaps taking Baghdad, even if there were not sufficient troops to hold it, might result in the general Arab uprising on which much of the Middle East strategy was based. To that point, Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey said, "It was necessary to gain strength by eating now, even if it involved indigestion later."<sup>30</sup> London also agreed to reinforce IEF D with two additional Indian divisions currently in Europe.<sup>31</sup>

As ordered, Townshend attacked at Ctesiphon, but this time the advance of his division would culminate against superior enemy numbers. The Ottoman commander,

Colonel Yusef Nureddin, who had skillfully led the army out of Townshend's trap at Kut, had been able to combine the strength of four divisions (18,000 soldiers and 52 guns) and had been preparing the ground, to include mining and obstructing the Tigris, for nearly two months.<sup>32</sup> Townshend had no idea that he was outnumbered because the air scout who had acquired the best sense of the enemy defenses never returned.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, his attack on 22 November was initially successful, capturing the first line of enemy trenches. By the end of the second day, both generals had taken so many casualties that each thought their own forces were beaten. On the 24th, Nureddin began withdrawing toward Baghdad, and Townshend, below 50-percent strength, did the same toward Kut, using boats to carry as many of his wounded as possible.<sup>34</sup> When Nureddin realized that the British were in full retreat he hastily turned his forces around and began to pursue. The 6th Division would soon become trapped at Kut.

The siege of Al Kut would last from December 1915 until April 1916, ending with the complete surrender of the 6th Division to Ottoman forces. Under pressure from Nixon, Townshend decided to withdraw no further down the Tigris than Kut.<sup>35</sup> Further withdrawal would have meant abandoning much of the division's artillery and stockpiles of food and munitions. In addition, Kut was good defensive ground, surrounded on three sides by a loop in the Tigris, and commanding the Shatt al-Hay, an ancient canal connecting Kut to Nasiriyya on the Euphrates. Townshend managed to evacuate many of his wounded and the IEF D headquarters staff before the Ottoman XIII and XVIII Corps, now under the leadership of accomplished German officer General Colmar von der Goltz, appeared and completely surrounded the town. Early Ottoman attempts to capture Kut by determined assault failed, so their tactics shifted to slowly squeezing the 6th Division's

defensive positions and starving them out.<sup>36</sup> The Ottomans also worked to improve their outer cordon in order to block relief efforts.



Figure 6. Aerial View Painting of the Siege at Kut, 1916

*Source:* Richard C. Carline, *Siege of Kut-el-Amara Seen from the Air*, 1919, Imperial War Museum, London, UK, <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/4318> (accessed 15 May 2013). An illustration of the siege at Kut. This view is roughly from the north, with a German Fokker is engaging a British Maurice-Farman overhead the besieged town. The Tigris River is reddish in color and surrounds the populated area on three sides. The blue-colored canal that diverts to the south is the Shatt al-Hay. Ottoman siege works are visible in straight lines north of the town and across the Tigris adjacent to the Shatt al-Hay.

All British attempts to break the siege failed. The 13th (Western) Division arrived in February, fresh from action at Gallipoli, under the command of Major General Stanley

Maude. Two more Indian divisions, the 3rd (Lahore) and 7th (Meerut), also arrived from the Western Front late in the siege. Along with the 12th Division, these units were organized into the Tigris Corps, first under the command of Lieutenant General Sir Fenton Aylmer, then under General Gorringe. Three major relief expeditions by the Tigris Corps all failed to break through to Kut. Efforts to resupply the 6th Division by air were also inadequate. On 29 April 1916, facing starvation, the remnants of the division completed destruction of their heavy weapons and munitions. Townshend then surrendered his force, and over 13,000 British and Indian soldiers marched into a captivity characterized by starvation and terrible mistreatment.<sup>37</sup> Relief efforts had resulted in an additional 23,000 casualties.<sup>38</sup> The loss of Kut was the greatest British military disaster of World War I, according to Townshend himself, comparable to the surrender at Yorktown.<sup>39</sup> The most serious loss however, was arguably on the Ottoman side: von der Goltz, the architect of the siege, died of typhoid (or perhaps poisoning) a few days before seeing his plans come to fruition.<sup>40</sup> No German replacement of his seniority ever came to Mesopotamia.

### Second Advance to Baghdad

In the wake of this crushing defeat, London would finally wrest direct control of the campaign from the Government of India and force a number of improvements in the areas of leadership, manpower, and resourcing; this allowed IEF D, now known as the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force, to regroup and bring the much expanded campaign to a successful conclusion. In the summer of 1916, while the bloody Somme Offensive raged in France, the general staff's first order of business for Mesopotamia was to find the proper general to sort out the mess that this campaign had become. General Nixon,



claiming ill health, had requested to be relieved in January, a few months before Townshend's surrender, and General Sir Percy Lake assumed command of the Mesopotamian Theater.<sup>41</sup> His command would be short-lived however, as following the disaster at Kut, London recalled him in August to testify before the Mesopotamian Commission. General Maude first assumed command of the Tigris Corps from General Gorringe, followed by overall command of the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force. He was a veteran of the Western Front, Gallipoli, and some of the toughest fighting in the relief efforts of March and April.<sup>42</sup> He continued and improved upon the reforms that Lake had initiated in January, steadily improving the morale and combat readiness of his command over the next months.

Improvements to the transportation network reduced many of the logistical and health problems that had been undermining the army's capabilities in the field.<sup>43</sup> The port at Basra finally received enough labor and equipment to begin moving stockpiles of food, munitions, and medicine to forward areas. Adequate numbers of shallow-draft boats and barges began to arrive. Newly built road and rail systems, along with necessary trucks and trains, assisted logisticians in the movement of material at chokepoints in the rivers. Adequate medicine and proper food generated improvements to the health and morale of the fighting men, who had been suffering from the harsh climate and various diseases.

Reinforcements and proper resourcing with the modern tools of warfare built the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force into an organization capable of going to Baghdad and beyond. Replacement troops, mostly from India, finally began to arrive at a rate that surpassed the departures of the sick and wounded. Maude reorganized the Tigris Corps into two full-strength corps: I Corps with the 3rd and 7th Divisions, and III Corps with

the 13th and 14th Divisions.<sup>44</sup> Enough aircraft and pilots also arrived to take control of the skies. Townshend had advanced from Egypt with only a few obsolete machines providing reconnaissance, and by the end of the siege of Kut a sufficient number of German pilots and aircraft were in theater that the Ottomans held air superiority.<sup>45</sup> By August, the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force had 27 modern aircraft in the fight and regained dominance in the air by November.<sup>46</sup> Finally, most of the artillery that had been available to IEF D consisted of light mountain guns, appropriate for frontier warfare in India but wholly inadequate against Ottoman entrenchment. The arrival of the 13th Division (the only full British unit in theater) also brought with it modern siege guns.

Additionally, the enemy situation had changed to Maude's advantage. Rather than pressing their advantage following the victory at Kut, the Ottoman leadership divided its forces and stayed on the defensive.<sup>47</sup> XIII Corps deployed to the northeast frontier of the Baghdad *vilayet*, where it defeated a Russian attack at Khaniqin (on the present-day border with Iran) in June. XVIII Corps remained in place and improved the defenses in the vicinity of Kut. This failure to engage the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force while it was on its heels gave Maude the breathing room he needed to effect much-needed reform.

Prepared at last for an offensive that could reverse the recent defeats in Mesopotamia, Maude's final obstacle was the leadership in London. Having previously deferred campaign decisions to the Government of India, the War Council in London had begun to informally control the campaign the previous February and assumed complete direction of the expedition in July.<sup>48</sup> On one hand, the War Council recognized that completely abandoning Mesopotamia at this point would be a national humiliation and

would certainly undermine British prestige in eyes of their Arab allies. On the other hand, the theater was simply not strategically important enough to provide it with any more resources. Chief of the Imperial General Staff Field Marshal William Robertson summed up this dilemma by saying, “We cannot come away, and we cannot go forward.”<sup>49</sup> Having ordered Lake in April to conduct defensive operations only, Robertson, possibly frustrated by the lack of progress and heavy casualties at the Somme, updated his orders to Maude on 30 September as follows:

The mission of the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force is to protect the oil fields and pipe lines in the vicinity of the Karun River, to maintain our occupation and control of the Basra *Vilayet*, and to deny hostile access to the Persian Gulf and southern Persia. At present no fresh advance to Baghdad can be contemplated, but it is the desire of His Majesty’s Government, if and when possible, to establish British influence in the Baghdad *Vilayet*. This further advance should not be undertaken unless and until sanction for it is given . . . No further reinforcements for the force must be expected. On the contrary it may become necessary to withdraw the 13th Division which was sent to Mesopotamia in order to assist in the attempted relief of [Kut].<sup>50</sup>

This was the last thing Maude wanted to hear. Not only was he in danger of losing his best division, the one he had personally led at Gallipoli, but his army was also being denied an opportunity to restore its morale and remove the stigma of Kut. After arguing the fitness of his army for the offensive, Maude received permission for a limited advance.

The Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force recaptured Kut and pursued the enemy army to the gates of Baghdad. This attack took on different characteristics than the one Townshend had conducted a year earlier. In December, Maude led a deliberate, methodical advance up both banks of the Tigris, always mindful of long lines of communication, limited transportation, and the need to keep his army in supply.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, unlike Townshend’s brilliant maneuver that attacked into the Ottoman rear

at Sin, Maude took advantage of his superior numbers and firepower to slowly squeeze the enemy out of position. Throughout January and February 1917, Maude's two corps eliminated enemy strong points and trench lines in fighting that resembled some of the action on the Western Front. Unlike the 6th Division, the Ottoman defenders managed to withdraw from the field before the trap slammed shut, but Maude kept his casualties low and marched into Kut on 23 February.<sup>52</sup> Despite a clear intent from London, if not specific orders, Maude pursued the Ottoman force to the west in order to maintain contact and pressure. I and III Corps advanced as they had before, up both banks in a deliberate manner, even pausing for resupply at Aziziyah. After three days, Maude ordered the march on Baghdad to continue, a move only approved in London after the advance was a *fait accompli*.

With the capture of Baghdad, victory followed victory for the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force until Maude's sudden death. After offering a brief resistance at the confluence of the Tigris and Diyala Rivers, Baghdad's Ottoman defenders withdrew in relatively good order by railroad to the north. Maude's forces entered Baghdad without further opposition on 11 March 1917.<sup>53</sup> Arab Cultural Expert and Oriental Secretary Gertrude Bell accompanied the military forces into Baghdad. According to her, "We were received . . . by an enthusiastic population who had been terrorized [by the Turks] for two and a half years and had passed the days immediately before our entry in acute fear for life and property."<sup>54</sup> Evidence of a popular national resistance to the British would not manifest for some time.

For the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force, hard fighting continued in multiple directions. Elements of the army remained to garrison and administer the city while three

columns pushed upriver on the Euphrates, Tigris, and Khalis Canal to prevent the remaining elements of Ottoman XIII and XVIII Corps from uniting.<sup>55</sup> The Ottomans continued to put up a determined resistance at the rail junction of Samarra and in other places, but following the fall of Baghdad the Ottoman strategic situation in Mesopotamia was hopeless. All that followed were relatively minor battles intended to keep an Ottoman grip on as much territory as possible before the war ended. On 18 November, in the middle of this unending string of victories, General Maude died of cholera, coincidentally, at the same Baghdad home in which German General von der Goltz had died a year earlier.<sup>56</sup> Leadership of the expedition then passed on to I Corps Commander Lieutenant General William Marshall.



Figure 7. Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force Marching into Baghdad, March 1917

*Source:* Stuart Menzies, *Sir Maude and Other Memories* (London, UK: Herbert Jenkins, 1920), 49. Advance elements of the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force march unopposed into Baghdad on 11 March 1917. The civilian crowd appears to be primarily adult male, though some children are also visible. The Bagdadi populace largely greeted the British with cooperation or indifference at this stage of the campaign.

With the death of Maude, expansion in the Mesopotamian Campaign gradually tapered off, the War Council gradually siphoned off combat elements to support other theaters. In April, the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force had physically linked up with a Russian force (the same that had been defeated at Khaniqin the previous year) northeast of Baghdad, leading to hopes of a joint expedition for the final defeat of the Turks.<sup>57</sup> However, Russia was progressively collapsing on its home front both in terms of its political situation and militarily with regard to the Germans. By October, the Bolshevik

Revolution was in full force, and the Russian element in Mesopotamia, always limited in its actual contributions, ceased to exist as a viable military force. In the same month, the War Council ordered the 3rd and 7th Divisions to redeploy via Egypt to the more strategically important Palestinian theater, and they departed Mesopotamia that winter.<sup>58</sup> From the remaining British and Indian troops, a large force embarked in March 1918 on a failed adventure to keep the oil-rich area around Baku in the Russian Caucasus from falling to the Bolshevik Revolution.<sup>59</sup> Because of the German Spring Offensive on the Western Front, the War Council authorized no reinforcements for Mesopotamia during this period.

That fall, when the final defeat of Germany in France appeared imminent, the remaining elements of the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force engaged in a final land grab that would have incredible long-term strategic consequences. In late October, while armistice negotiations with the Ottomans were close to conclusion, British and Indian troops occupied the city of Mosul and its surrounding *vilayet*. Much of this land was known to be rich in oil, but apart from the city of Mosul itself, it was never considered part of Mesopotamia—at least not by the Turks or Kurds. The Armistice of Mudros ended Ottoman involvement in World War I on 1 November 1918, only hours after the *vilayet* fell into British hands.<sup>60</sup> This final move would have the far-reaching effect of making vast Kurdish tribal areas a de facto part of the new state of Iraq.

At the end of this conventional campaign, British and Indian forces in theater totaled 112,000 combat soldiers supported by a staggering 302,000 logistical troops and civilians, highlighting the efforts necessary to keep this force in supply along extended lines of communication as well as those needed to administer captured territory.<sup>61</sup> British

and Indian final casualties consisted of nearly 15,000 killed in action; almost 13,000 dead of various diseases, including heatstroke; more than 50,000 wounded or sick to the point of necessary evacuation; and approximately 13,500 captured, most of them at Kut, for a total of 92,501.<sup>62</sup>

### Conclusion

In summary, the conventional campaign in Mesopotamia began as a limited operation to ensure the security of oil for the Royal Navy. It achieved these objectives early and at low cost. The mission began to expand beyond its original intentions due to lack of oversight from the highest authorities in London, political fantasies of the British Government of India for a post-war Indian colony, and military leadership that was continuously obsessed about seeking out the next center of enemy resistance in order to secure the one just captured. The manpower, resources, and logistics network did not support this expanded mission, and an entire division of British and Indian soldiers became cut off and captured as a result. This disaster and loss of prestige forced London to take direct control of the campaign and provide resources that could ill-afford to be stripped from more critical theaters. While ultimately successful, the campaign's end result was that Britain would now have to govern a hostile population of Arabs and Kurds, who while joyous to free of the Ottoman Turks, would become violently opposed to rule by non-Muslims. This is the subject of the following chapter.

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<sup>1</sup>Edip Onco, "The Beginnings of Ottoman-German Partnership: Diplomatic and Military Relations between Germany and the Ottoman Empire before the First World War" (Master's thesis, Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey, September 2003), 23.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 56.



<sup>3</sup>Elizabeth Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914-1971* (London, UK: Chatto and Windus, 1981), 24.

<sup>4</sup>Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis, 1911-1918* (London, UK: Thornton Butterworth, 1931), 278.

<sup>5</sup>Adrian Gilbert, *Illustrated History of World War I* (New York: Bison Books, 1988), 66.

<sup>6</sup>From the Ottoman perspective, then, the British had unlawfully seized two of their vessels, and the Germans generously provided replacements. Churchill, 280-284.

<sup>7</sup>Onco, 69-70.

<sup>8</sup>Ernest Jackh, *The Rising Crescent: Turkey Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (New York: Farrar and Rinehar, Inc., 1944), 20-21, 139.

<sup>9</sup>The first defeat involved the Austro-Hungarians against the Russians in the East, and the second involved the Germans against the French and British in the West. Gilbert, 21-22, 33.

<sup>10</sup>Onco, 93-94.

<sup>11</sup>Peter Morris, "Intelligence and its Interpretation: Mesopotamia, 1914-1916," in *Intelligence and International Relations, 1900-1945*, eds. Christopher Andrew and Jeremy Noakes (Exeter, UK: Exeter University Publications, 1987), 85-86.

<sup>12</sup>Barker, *First Iraq War*, 24-25.

<sup>13</sup>George B. Hunter, *The Mesopotamia Campaign in the World War* (Army War College Lecture, Conduct of War Course Number 23, Washington, DC, April 1930), 2.

<sup>14</sup>Barker, 24-25.

<sup>15</sup>The Ottoman Army in Mesopotamia was organized as the Fourth Army, consisting of XII and XIII Corps, with two divisions each. These forces did not enjoy any of the benefits of the military reforms enacted during 1913-1914, including the services of German advisers. These Mesopotamian divisions had strengths of 8,000 to 9,000 soldiers, roughly half that of a British division, and were massively underequipped in terms of weapons, entrenching gear, and even uniforms. When the British landed in November, this army remained distributed in a number of frontier posts rather than concentrating to defeat the enemy landings at the only place they could have accomplished them. There were only 4,700 infantry, 18 artillery pieces, and two machine guns in the Basra area during the British attack. Of these, less than 400 soldiers were present to defend the Al Faw Peninsula. Townshend, *Desert Hell*, ch. I-3.

<sup>16</sup>Barker, 25.

- <sup>17</sup>Townshend, *Desert Hell*, ch. I-4.
- <sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 34.
- <sup>19</sup>Barker, 34-36.
- <sup>20</sup>Patrick Crowley, *Kut 1916: Courage and Failure in Iraq* (Gloucestershire, UK: Spellmount, 2009), 17-19.
- <sup>21</sup>Gilbert, 68-72.
- <sup>22</sup>Among the losses of British warships during the Dardanelles operation was the pre-Dreadnaught battleship HMS Ocean, which had served as flagship for the Al Faw landings the previous November. *Ocean* sank after being struck by a mine while coming to the relief of HMS Irresistible, another battleship that had likewise been critically damaged by a mine. Churchill, 393-394.
- <sup>23</sup>Townshend, *Desert Hell*, ch. III-1.
- <sup>24</sup>Crowley, 19-22.
- <sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 22-16.
- <sup>26</sup>Barker, 74-76.
- <sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 80.
- <sup>28</sup>Crowley, 27-30.
- <sup>29</sup>Townshend, *Desert Hell*, ch. II-1.
- <sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>31</sup>Hunter, 5.
- <sup>32</sup>Barker, 97-98.
- <sup>33</sup>Peter J. Lambert, "The Forgotten Air War: Airpower in the Mesopotamian Campaign" (Master's thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 2003), 55.
- <sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 100-104.
- <sup>35</sup>Crowley, 35-36.
- <sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 56.
- <sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 168-169.

<sup>38</sup>Townshend, *Desert Hell*, ch. II-10.

<sup>39</sup>Charles Vere Ferrers Townshend, *My Campaign in Mesopotamia* (New York: J. A. McCann Co., 1920), 219, 277.

<sup>40</sup>Barker, 228.

<sup>41</sup>Townshend, *Desert Hell*, ch. II-7.

<sup>42</sup>Stuart Menzies, *Sir Stanley Maude and Other Memories* (London, UK: Herbert Jenkins, 1920), 8.

<sup>43</sup>Townshend, *Desert Hell*, ch. III-3.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, ch. III-6.

<sup>45</sup>Lambert, 72.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>47</sup>Hunter, 8.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, 14-15.

<sup>49</sup>Townshend, *Desert Hell*, ch. III-1.

<sup>50</sup>Barker, 263.

<sup>51</sup>Townshend, *Desert Hell*, ch. III-1.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup>Barker, 306-316.

<sup>54</sup>Bell, 31.

<sup>55</sup>Townshend, *Desert Hell*, ch. IV-1.

<sup>56</sup>Barker, 352-354.

<sup>57</sup>Hunter, 11.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>59</sup>Townshend, *Desert Hell*, ch. IV-4.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, ch. IV-5.

<sup>61</sup>Hunter, 15.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 14.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE GREAT IRAQI REVOLUTION

In the summer of 1920, a large-scale rebellion erupted in Iraq against British civil and military authorities. The cause was a complicated mixture of ethnic, religious, and tribal issues, accelerated by the perception of broken promises, an unresponsive civil administration, and an inadequate military garrison. The British failed to react to several early indications and warnings of violent resistance, and they were not prepared when the region around the lower Euphrates broke out in revolt. Surprising defeats of British forces encouraged the spread of rebellion until much of populated Iraq was in open resistance. A combination of heavy military reinforcements, operations dedicated to securing the lines of communication between garrisons, and punitive actions largely pacified the region by October.

The rebellion had profound effects for the Iraqi people and the British who governed them. Though militarily unsuccessful, this national uprising did much to shape the character of the nascent Iraqi state. The people would come to call it *Thawrat al-Ishrin*, “The Revolution of the Twenties,” or *Al-Thawra al-‘Iraqiyya al-Kubra*, “The Great Iraqi Revolution.”<sup>1</sup> For the British, in the context of post-World War I spending cuts and demobilization, the human and financial cost of suppressing the revolt convinced the political leadership that the current direct administration of Iraq was not sustainable. In early 1921, London responded to Iraqi concerns about non-Muslim rule by installing an Arab king, one whom the British believed would be amenable to their strategic interests.

### Political Antecedents

The British generated significant political problems for themselves with conflicting promises to parties of divergent interests during World War I. Partially to placate their American allies, London and Paris had guaranteed self-determination for the people of Syria, Palestine, and Mesopotamia, as embodied by the Anglo-French Declaration of 1918.<sup>2</sup> However, Britain and France had earlier come to secret terms for dividing the Middle East into spheres of influence.<sup>3</sup> This embarrassing fact became public knowledge when the Bolsheviks released the details of the agreement after coming to power in Russia, much to the concern of the Arab leadership and the United States (U.S.). Further, in November 1917, the British declared their newly occupied Palestinian territories as a homeland for displaced Jewish people.<sup>4</sup> From the Arab perspective, promises to the French and Jews were irrelevant: Arabs fought and bled to liberate their homeland; French and Jewish contributions were insignificant in comparison. More importantly, Arab irregular forces physically held much of the key terrain in Palestine and Syria. They expected their independence to be recognized and honored without delay.

The Arab Revolt had been a key component of British Middle Eastern strategy for defeating the Ottoman Empire. In June 1916, many of the Arab tribes under the leadership of Sharif Hussein bin Ali rose up against the Ottoman Turks.<sup>5</sup> Some of Hussein's sons, Feisal and Abdullah in particular, served as tactical commanders in this movement. Heavily subsidized with British money and weaponry, the Arab Revolt initially tied down thousands of Ottoman troops in the Arabian Peninsula who could have otherwise threatened the Suez Canal. In 1917, Feisal partnered with British intelligence

officer T. E. Lawrence to directly coordinate tribal efforts with General Edmund Allenby's campaign in Palestine. Feisal supported Allenby's maneuver by attacking targets in Ottoman rear areas, railroads in particular. In October 1918, Feisal led his Arab forces in the capture of Damascus, an important and historical center of regional trade.<sup>6</sup>

Allied decisions in the wake of conflict left the Arab leadership feeling disappointed and even betrayed. Feisal and Lawrence attended the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 with the hope that the Allies would recognize an independent Arab Syria in accordance with the Anglo-French Declaration. However, France asserted a responsibility to directly administer Syria with Britain doing very little to shore up Feisal's claim. The U.S. refused to support the expansion of colonialism by the victorious Allies but acquiesced to the notion of "mandate" administration, wherein the Allies, with authority granted to them by the newly established League of Nations, would temporarily govern former Ottoman and German territories in order to prepare them for eventual independence.<sup>7</sup> Under this mandate system, France would administer Syria and Lebanon, and Britain would administer Palestine (including Transjordan) and Mesopotamia. This situation was entirely unacceptable to the Arab Syrian Congress, which had been governing in Damascus since the end of the war. On 8 March 1920, this body defied the French by declaring independence and installing Feisal as king.<sup>8</sup> The French ousted Feisal in July, just as the Iraqi tribes were beginning to rise against British rule.<sup>9</sup>



Figure 8. Prince Feisal and Colonel Lawrence at Versailles, 1919

*Source:* Rory Stewart, “The Enduring Impact of T. E. Lawrence,” *Learning to Say Nothing*, 2010, <http://agentcoop.wordpress.com/2010/02/03/the-enduring-impact-of-t-e-lawrence/> (accessed 1 April 2013). Prince Feisal (of the Hejaz) at Versailles in 1919 to seek Allied support for an independent Arab state in Syria. Colonel T. E. Lawrence is pictured directly to the right of the prince.

With regard to Mesopotamia, the British government was divided on exactly how to carry out its impending mandate.<sup>10</sup> The India Office argued for an administration akin to the Government of India: direct British rule with minimal participation from locals as the optimal course of action for building a functional state. This view was best personified by Sir Arnold Talbot Wilson, the Acting Civil Commissioner of Mesopotamia from 1918-1920. The British War and Foreign Offices however, advocated a large measure of Arab autonomy with a leadership role set aside for one of Sharif Hussein’s sons. This was the public stance of T. E. Lawrence as argued at Versailles and beyond.



The contrasting impacts of the Arab Revolt on the Mesopotamian and Palestinian Campaigns help to explain this divergence in view. In Mesopotamia, the Arab Revolt had little direct military effect. The previously discussed risings against the Ottomans in the Shi'a holy cities of Najaf and Karbala were unrelated to the larger revolt. After Sharif Hussein declared the uprising in June 1916, the British offered Arab prisoners of war, captured in Mesopotamia, an opportunity out of captivity to join the fight against the Ottoman Turks. Of 132 surrendered Arab officers serving in the Ottoman Army, 102 chose to remain prisoners rather than take up arms against their former comrades.<sup>11</sup> Further, unlike in Palestine, the Arab tribes proved to be more of a hindrance to the British scheme of maneuver rather than a force multiplier. For instance, one task given to the Royal Flying Corps during the conventional campaign was to strafe and bomb hostile tribal elements that would attack the flanks of the expedition.<sup>12</sup> Also during the campaign, the need to support a large army for an extended period along stretched lines of communication meant that the British had to become more deeply involved in matters of civil administration in Mesopotamia than in Palestine. Particularly from 1916 on, with minimal local participation in terms of leadership, the civil elements of the expedition were heavily engaged in building road and rail networks, establishing an education system, collecting revenue, organizing a constabulary, and enforcing the law.<sup>13</sup> For these reasons, Wilson did not hold Sharif Hussein and his sons with the same esteem as did Lawrence, and he saw no evidence that the people of Iraq would be able to effectively administer a nascent state. The Iraqis, he communicated to London, were “unfit to govern themselves” and “equally unfit for a voice in the forming of the government.”<sup>14</sup>

In 1920, as the details of the mandate were soon to go into effect, Wilson made a number of political decisions that not only undermined official British foreign policy but also alienated key Iraqi tribal and religious leaders. The April San Remo Conference formally allocated mandates of the former Ottoman territories, conferring mandatory powers on Britain over Mesopotamia.<sup>15</sup> The civil administration made an official announcement on 3 May but did a poor job of providing information to the public on exactly what the mandate meant; rumors spread wildly that Iraq had just become a “protectorate” in the mold of Egypt, or even a “colony” like India. Wilson also disregarded official instructions from London that he was to convey intentions that the Iraqi state’s new constitution was to be drafted “in consultation with native authorities” and that the civil administration was to establish “a predominantly Arab Council of State under an Arab President.”<sup>16</sup> Consequently, the Iraqis never heard this plan. A delegation of 15 Iraqis selected by tribal leadership met with Wilson on 2 June; instead of using this opportunity to allay their fears about British intentions, Wilson merely deferred their questions to London and warned them of grave consequences should there be any violence.<sup>17</sup> Instead of dissuading the delegation, this rebuff left many of the tribal and religious leaders believing that only armed struggle would lead to independence. One effect of this meeting was a *fatwa*, or Islamic religious edict, issued by the newly installed Grand Ayatollah<sup>18</sup> Muhammad Taqi Shirazi, the contents of which were widely printed and distributed. The message to the faithful was simple: “None but Muslims have any right to rule over Muslims.”<sup>19</sup> For the British and Indians working in Mesopotamia, war was again imminent.

### Military Antecedents

Conditions on the ground in Iraq made the region well-suited for an insurgency long before the results of the San Remo Conference led to open rebellion. Though not organized as a fighting force, the military-age male population of Iraq was generally well armed and with some degree of martial skill. Modern weapons were everywhere. After the previously described Battle of Shaiba, for instance, as the routed Ottoman units retreated toward Nasiriyya, Arabs from the tribal marsh areas ambushed the soldiers and stole thousands of German Mauser rifles.<sup>20</sup> British Lee-Enfield rifles, either stolen or captured over the course of the campaign, were also widely available. Neither was there any shortage of ammunition. To make matters worse, at the end of the war thousands of former Ottoman soldiers had returned to their homes with few apparent prospects of employment. Efforts of the civil administration to organize levies for constabulary and semi-military functions had been underway for some time, but only a few hundred locals (many without prior service training) joined.<sup>21</sup> Further, no effort to specifically recruit former Ottoman personnel, especially officers, was evident in the period before the rebellion. This surplus of weapons and young men without jobs provided a critical means to those tribal and religious elements intent on armed struggle.

Also, the British were not resourced or organized to deal with a large-scale rebellion. In the summer of 1920, British and Indian forces remaining in Mesopotamia consisted of two divisions, the 17th and 18th; two squadrons of the newly constituted Royal Air Force, the 6th and 30th; armored cars but no tanks; and a number of armed river craft.<sup>22</sup> Lieutenant General Sir Aylmer Haldane had assumed command of the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force in March.<sup>23</sup> According to his initial assessment of

friendly forces, between an inadequate table of equipment, detachments to Persia, and soldiers unfit for duty, Haldane had roughly the combat power of a single division that would have fought on the Western Front, and this force was dispersed across the entire occupied area.<sup>24</sup> Also there was neither unity of command nor of effort over the British mission in Mesopotamia. Wilson as Acting Civil Commissioner had no authority over military matters and could only request that Haldane take certain measures.<sup>25</sup> This situation caused a great deal of friction both before and during the conflict. For example, Wilson, who was by summer fully alarmed by deteriorating civil order, repeatedly asserted to Haldane the necessity of more troops. Haldane refused to do so until well into the crisis because of previous guidance from Churchill (now Secretary of State for War) to reduce the military presence in Mesopotamia as soon as practical.

Several incidents of violence against the British occupation occurred at various locations across Mesopotamia well before the outbreak of general rebellion. People of the Shi'a holy cities, who had been operating independently of the Ottoman Empire since 1915, were problematic from an early date. After the British captured Baghdad in March 1917, delegates from Najaf and Karbala established formal communication with the British civil administration, which was at that time headed by Sir Percy Cox.<sup>26</sup> The Shi'a religious leadership viewed this exchange as a courtesy between equals who had defeated the Turks; Cox interpreted it as a gesture of submission, but gave the Shi'a clergy a mandate to govern the holy cities until British administration was in place. The British established a local administrative detachment in Najaf by early 1918, consisting of a small garrison and a British captain acting as the local political officer.



Figure 9. Aerial View of Najaf, 1920

*Source:* Sir Aylmer Haldane, *The Insurrection in Mesopotamia, 1920* (London, UK: Imperial War Museum, Department of Printed Books, 1922), 264. The dome of the Imam Ali Mosque is visible at the center of the walled Old City. Mausoleums in the *Wadi al-Salaam* are visible in the right foreground. Compare with the 2004 picture in chapter 1 to note the growth of the cemetery over the next 80 years.

Taxation quickly became a source of unrest. As a city in rebellion against Turkish rule, the people of Najaf had not paid taxes for years, and the British were far more proficient at and insistent on their collection than the Ottomans ever had been.<sup>27</sup>

Insurgents from Najaf increasingly fired on approaching Indian cavalry patrols and British aircraft. This resistance peaked with the well-planned ambush and murder of the local political officer on 19 March.<sup>28</sup> The regional brigade commander considered an aerial or artillery bombardment of the city as collective punishment, but then decided on

a more measured response. After coercing the city leadership by physically seizing control of the local water supply, he exacted a punitive tax of money and weapons as well as the surrender of about 100 suspected insurgents, who were deported to India as prisoners of war. Najaf returned to calm for the moment.

Portions of the newly acquired Kurdish areas also became restive in advance of the main rebellion. Sheikh Mahmud Barzanji, a Kurd chieftain ruling in the northeast areas of the former Mosul *vilayet*, initially cooperated with the British and governed in their name with the understanding that Kurdish autonomy would be guaranteed. Wilson even met with Mahmud on 1 December 1918 to coordinate how British administration would be enacted to support this eventual autonomy.<sup>29</sup> Over the next month however, Wilson grew distrustful of Mahmud's declared intentions to form a Kurdish state from the tribal areas of not only Iraq but also portions of Persia and the newly formed Republic of Turkey. Through the heavy-handed actions of the regional political officer, Lieutenant Colonel Gerard Leachman, Wilson began to squeeze Mahmud out of his position of leadership. Mahmud realized what was happening and reacted by physically seizing control of the Persian-border town of Rulaimaniyya on 20 May 1919.<sup>30</sup> Fortunately for the British, this revolt remained localized and never grew beyond 300 enemy fighters. Two brigades with air support put down the Kurdish rebellion and captured Mahmud on 18 June. A tribunal in Baghdad sentenced him to death, but Lieutenant General Sir George MacMunn (Haldane's predecessor) commuted the sentence to 10 years of banishment, a portion of which Mahmud would serve in India until his early release in 1922.<sup>31</sup> Wilson was reportedly horrified by MacMunn's leniency in this regard, an early indicator of the growing rift between the civil and military administrations.

Two more blatant armed challenges to British authority occurred prior to the general uprising. The first of these was at Dayr al-Zawr, a town on the upper Euphrates within modern Syria. The borders between what would become Iraq and Syria remained obscure long after the end of World War I, and British authorities had dispatched a political officer and small garrison to Dayr as a temporary measure until the official resolution of borders. On 13 December 1919, as tensions were heating over the status of the independent Arab state in Syria, former Ottoman officer Ramadhan Shallash led an attack that seized Dayr and ejected the British garrison.<sup>32</sup> That he was acting under the authority of the Arab Syrian Congress was doubtful, but the British took no physical action to reassert their authority because Dayr was in an area soon to fall under French authority. Fairly or not, this action contributed to Wilson's distrust of and disdain for Feisal and the other Sharifian leadership. Haldane, who assumed command in Mesopotamia a few months after this incident, later characterized it as a critical moment when Iraqis began to believe that they could defeat the British in the field.<sup>33</sup>

An insurgent rising at Tal Afar, a Turkmen village in the northwest Mosul *vilayet*, was the single deadliest incident since the end of the war. On 3 June 1920, an Iraqi member of the local levies murdered the British commanding officer, and Turkmen insurgents living among the townspeople rose up.<sup>34</sup> The remainder of the Iraqi levies either threw down their arms or joined with the insurgents. The few British and Indian troops holed up in their headquarters until they too, were overrun and killed. A section of armored cars unwisely entered the town without understanding the situation, and an overwhelming numbers of insurgents ambushed them in the narrow defiles of the urban environment, resulting in the death of all but one crewmember who escaped. The insurgents even managed to shoot down an airplane from Mosul that had been dispatched to investigate after the telegraph communications ceased. The pilot managed a forced

landing outside of the town and survived. In all, 16 British soldiers, including two officers, were dead. The military governor in Mosul dispatched a column consisting of a combined infantry-cavalry battalion with artillery and aerial support. Resistance to its advance was cursory, and most of the insurgents fled into Syrian territory. According to Bell and Haldane, British forces restored civil administration by 9 June and handed down unspecified “punitive” measures on the townspeople.<sup>35</sup>

What happened in the weeks following this event again illustrates an absence of unity of effort between the civil and military administrations. Wilson’s meeting with the delegation of 15 had taken place on the same day as the Tal Afar uprising. He was also well informed on Grand Ayatollah Shirazi’s widespread *fatwa* against British governance. To Wilson’s credit, though some of his decisions had directly precipitated events that followed, he was arguably more aware than Haldane of the escalating enemy situation in June 1920. In Haldane’s view, a minor incident had occurred, but the overwhelming response sent an appropriate message about British resolve (unlike the absence of response to the attack at Dayr). To be fair to Haldane, he was focused at the time, not on events in Mesopotamia, but on the real possibility of a Bolshevik invasion of Persia, to which he had earlier deployed two battalions as a show of force.<sup>36</sup> In fact, he was not even physically present in Baghdad for consultation with Wilson on these matters. On 6 June, before Tal Afar was even fully resolved, Haldane departed by train for Persia to inspect his detached battalions and personally investigate a Bolshevik naval attack that had taken place on 18 May at the Caspian Sea port of Bandar-e Anzali. Wilson implored Haldane to return to Baghdad, request significant reinforcements at the earliest opportunity, and evacuate British noncombatants (mostly the families of civil and military personnel).<sup>37</sup> Haldane would neither acquiesce to reinforcement for reasons already discussed, nor to initiate an evacuation in the grueling summer heat that would constipate the rail and river network. He did however, cut short his inspection tour of Persia and turned back for Mesopotamia on 14 June.



### Ignition and Spread of the Insurrection

Though indications and warnings of violence were present in many areas across Iraq, the British military was caught unprepared when armed rebellion broke out all along the lower Euphrates. Angry protests had been occurring in many of the cities, leaflets announcing *fatwas* against both the British administration and Iraqis who assisted it were in wide circulation, and the previously described attacks at Tal Afar et.al. proved that the insurgents were not afraid to engage British forces under circumstances where they could achieve local superiority. The issue of taxation would provide a spark for violence, just as it had at Najaf two years earlier; only this time it would result in widespread uprising. On 1 July the local political officer at Rumaitha, a town on the Euphrates between Samawa and Diwaniyya, arrested a local sheikh for refusing to pay his taxes.<sup>38</sup> The reaction of the locals was immediate: the tribal banners went on full display, which was again, an ancient Arab symbol of rebellion. Large numbers of armed men stormed the jail and freed the sheikh. Then they laid siege to the British political offices on the river, cut the rail and wire to the town, destroyed a bridge, and began digging trenches on the outskirts. Between 2 and 7 July, three separate relief columns tried to break through and failed at a total cost of nearly 90 killed and over 200 wounded. Reports of the extent and quality of the rebel defensive works were especially disturbing to Haldane; he was now certain that the enemy consisted of many Ottoman-trained personnel.<sup>39</sup> By 12 July, the besieged Rumaitha garrison reported by radio that its food was running low. While Haldane assembled a relief force consisting of units from four different brigades, British airplanes assisted the garrison by dropping food and ammunition, with mixed results, and providing suppressive fires while raiding parties ventured from the safety of the

compound to find food in the town. The fourth attempt at relief advanced from Baghdad in a deliberate manner, marching along the main rail and repairing breaks by insurgents as they went. This combined unit fought its way through to the Rumaitha garrison on 20 July.<sup>40</sup>

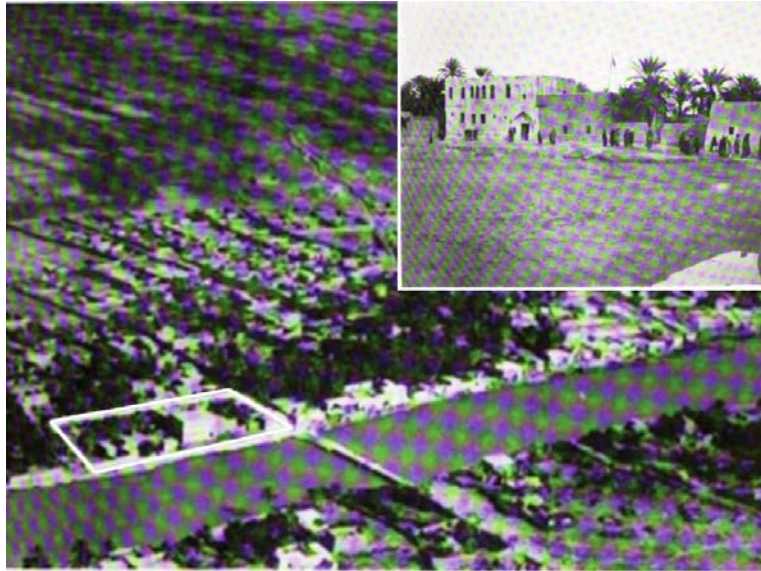


Figure 10. Siege of Rumaitha, July 1920

*Source:* Sir Aylmer Haldane, *The Insurrection in Mesopotamia, 1920* (London, UK: Imperial War Museum, Department of Printed Books, 1922), 76. The defended area is to the lower left, surrounded in white. A surface view is depicted in the upper right.

Unfortunately for the British, by the time they had broken the siege at Rumaitha, word had spread of the preceding insurgent victories, and escalating rebellion spread with it. As more and more banners went up, political officers stationed in towns and villages throughout the south desperately requested reinforcement for their tiny garrisons. In Kifl, a town situated on the road between Hilla and Najaf, the local political officer made such a plea for assistance. Because insurgents were targeting small units on the roads, the

commanding general of the 18th Division ordered that these reinforcements to Kifl be escorted with overwhelming force. The “Manchester Column,” as it came to be known, consisted of an infantry battalion (2d Battalion, Manchester Regiment, minus one company), two cavalry squadrons, a battery of artillery, and a company of Sikh pioneers.<sup>41</sup> A show of force such as this was intended to discourage the insurgents from taking any action. However, to the surprise of the British, on 24 July, approximately 10,000 armed men engaged the column in a well-coordinated night attack in the vicinity of the Rustumiyya Canal, north of Kifl. The insurgents soundly defeated the Manchester Column, killing 20 soldiers, wounding 60 more, and capturing 318 prisoners and a functional QF 18 pounder (18-pdr.) artillery piece.<sup>42</sup> The survivors retreated back to Hilla, but the insurgents did not press their victory and pursue. They concentrated instead on looting the abandoned logistical trains, which included a generous supply of rounds for their newly captured 18-pdr.

With the disaster of the Manchester Column, the British administration lost its grip on much of the Shi’a areas in the south. The lower Euphrates from Karbala to Samawa, with the exception of Hilla, fell under insurgent control.<sup>43</sup> Additionally, most of the villages that lined the Shatt al-Hay also rose up. By the end of August, Haldane’s best estimates placed the enemy’s numbers at approximately 131,000 with around 60,000 modern weapons.<sup>44</sup> Najaf had become the spiritual and political center of the uprising, and a provisional governing council was in place there, though its ability to exercise command and control over the various rebelling tribes was very limited.<sup>45</sup> To make matters worse, August also saw the rising of Sunni Arab villages in the north. For instance, on 12 August the assassination of political officer Lieutenant Colonel

Leachman<sup>46</sup> near Fallujah set off a series of uprisings along the upper Euphrates and forced British forces to abandon the town of Hit.<sup>47</sup> Sunni areas along the upper Tigris and Diyala also rose under tribal banners during this period. Churchill commented on the deteriorating situation as follows:

It is an extraordinary thing that the British civil administration should have succeeded in such a short time in alienating the whole country to such an extent that the Arabs have laid aside the blood feuds they have nursed for centuries and that Sunni and Shi'a tribes are working together.<sup>48</sup>

August 1920 was the nadir of the rebellion for the British. Insurgency had reached its peak strength and was no longer isolated to the Shi'a areas. British military forces, already woefully inadequate, had been dispersed in such a manner that commanders at all levels found difficulty with massing if and when the insurgency provided a target. Furthermore, the rebellion would take advantage of any British troop movements in one area to spread to another. Haldane likened the situation to "a sheet of parchment, which rises at any point where a weight is lifted from its surface."<sup>49</sup> Additionally, unlike at Tal Afar in June, Iraqi insurgents were no longer courteously melting away when confronted with a superior British unit. Rumaitha and Kifl proved that the Arabs could and would stand up to a modern army. The British were going to have to fight if they wanted to win; merely showing up was not going to produce victory. While awaiting the reinforcements necessary to effect a counterinsurgency, Haldane managed the situation as best he could with the troops on hand. In some cases, this meant ordering small units to dig in and hold until relieved, as they had at Rumaitha, allocating them priority for air support. In others, it meant large-scale withdrawal and consolidation. For instance, Haldane ordered the entire garrison at Diwaniyya to pull out and march to Hilla, where the disaster of the Manchester Column left the local garrison depleted and demoralized.<sup>50</sup> This decision

ceded key terrain to the enemy without a fight but also ensured that the British would hold a critical rail node south of Baghdad for the duration of the crisis.

### Military Measures

With adequate reinforcements, Haldane was able to bring about a satisfactory military conclusion through a combination of security and punitive measures that eroded the will of the insurgency to continue armed resistance. As earlier discussed, Haldane initially refused to entertain Wilson's demands for reinforcement. Haldane's first such request of the War Office was not until 8 July, one week after the rebellion ignited at Rumaitha, when he asked for an infantry brigade and artillery battery.<sup>51</sup> By the end of August, Haldane's requests extended to two full divisions. Churchill, who was still focused on demobilization, initially only authorized limited forces. By 7 September though, he seemed to appreciate the gravity of the situation. In a telegram to Haldane: "Anything we can do to assist you we shall not hesitate to do."<sup>52</sup> The first reinforcements, a single Indian rifle battalion, arrived in Baghdad on 10 August.<sup>53</sup> By October, the 6th Division (reconstituted since the surrender at Kut in 1916) had also come from India as well as the 36th Indian (Mixed) Brigade from Persia.<sup>54</sup> Haldane had less than 60,000 British and Indian soldiers at his disposal in July; by September, he would command over 100,000.<sup>55</sup>

Hastily built fortifications allowed for protection of key terrain and lines of communication with minimal manpower, allowing Haldane to concentrate larger formations at decisive points. Well before the onset of rebellion, he had ordered the construction of blockhouses at British airfields as a force protection measure. In July, the Baghdad defense forces built such positions at bridges and other vulnerable points,

reducing in Haldane's estimation the garrison requirement in the capital by several battalions.<sup>56</sup> Borrowing on his experience in the Second Boer War, Haldane also ordered blockhouses emplaced along the railways to secure his lines of communication. The expeditionary force's main route of supply and reinforcement extended from Basra to Kut via the Tigris, and then from Kut to Baghdad by rail. By 17 September, the Kut-Baghdad line was covered by a total of 173 blockhouses linked with a combination of wired and wireless communication, and the flow of munitions, food, and manpower to the capital continued uninterrupted.<sup>57</sup>



Figure 11. Blockhouse #19 at Baghdad, 1920

*Source:* Sir Aylmer Haldane, *The Insurrection in Mesopotamia, 1920* (London, UK: Imperial War Museum, Department of Printed Books, 1922), 112. This simple construction was typical of hundreds of such strong points built between July and October 1920.

Haldane employed various punitive measures, depending on the situation, in order to break the ability and will of popular resistance. In some cases, naked firepower was the answer. Haldane described authorizing air attack, artillery bombardment, and rifle grenades against primitive structures in rebellious villages.<sup>58</sup> The standoff distance provided by these weapons facilitated engagement for which the enemy had no answer in daylight and reduced British and Indian casualties. Haldane and his subordinate commanders demonstrated forbearance on the heavy use of firepower in more urban environments, particularly in the vicinity of ancient religious sites, and in these cases they usually exercised other means.<sup>59</sup> Control of water, for instance, was a non-kinetic method for imposing British will. After completing the withdrawal from Diwaniyya and consolidating at Hilla, elements of the garrison secured the Hindinyya Barrage on 13 August.<sup>60</sup> This dam, constructed just prior to World War I, served as an important Euphrates crossing and the means to control the flow of river water down several canals, including the one servicing Karbala. Haldane attributed water starvation as a key component in bringing about the peaceful submission of the holy city on 16 October.<sup>61</sup> Another common punitive measure was rifle and monetary fines. When a rebellious tribe, village, or city wished to come back under British authority, the insurgent leadership had to first turn over weapons and monies (or other values possession, such as animals) commensurate with its means. This would serve the dual purpose of a physical token of submission as well as reducing that insurgent element's ability to make future war or aid others in doing so. By the end of the uprising, British authorities had seized over 63,000 rifles and more than 3,000,000 rounds of ammunition.<sup>62</sup>

In October, a series of offensive operations relieved long-isolated British outposts and led to formal submission of the remaining tribes in rebellion. Generally, from August on, British ground forces would avoid direct operations on urban terrain and engage insurgent with standoff or non-kinetic means as previously discussed. Exceptions to this were when it was necessary to break through to besieged units. The local garrisons at Samawa and Kufa had been cut off since the fighting began in July, their only outside assistance in the form of aerial-delivered logistical and fire support. On 14 October, infantry supported by artillery and air broke through to the Samawa garrison at a cost of 11 killed, 32 wounded, and 29 missing.<sup>63</sup> The garrison was mostly unharmed. At Kufa, the experience had been different, because insurgents had been using the 18-pdr. gun captured at Kifl in July to pound the outpost (and any approaching relief boats, such as HMS Firefly) with a total of 135 rounds.<sup>64</sup> British forces relieved the garrison on 18 October, discovering that 25 of them had been killed and another 27 wounded during three months of siege. The next day representatives from the holy city of Najaf arrived in Kufa to negotiate for an honorable peace, leveraging the prisoners still held from the disaster of the Manchester Column. Haldane agreed to receive the Najafi leadership and end the war but only if they would agree to a formal, public surrender on behalf of the rebellious tribes:

The tribes, without provocation worthy of the name, had chosen to risk the arbitrament of arms; they had been overcome and must be made to pass beneath the Caudine Forks [meaning submission to a public humiliation as a symbol of their acceptance of defeat].<sup>65</sup>

At 1000 on 16 November, four British and Indian infantry battalions marched into Najaf alongside three batteries of artillery and under the watch of 10 aircraft.<sup>66</sup> Haldane had the terms of surrender read aloud in English and Arabic, and the sheikhs or their designated



representatives signed them. While some relatively light insurgent activity continued into 1921, by and large military operations were over, and political reconciliation was now the main effort.



Figure 12. Formal Surrender of Tribes at Najaf, November 1920

*Source:* Sir Aylmer Haldane, *The Insurrection in Mesopotamia, 1920* (London, UK: Imperial War Museum, Department of Printed Books, 1922), 264. Note that the representatives of His Majesty's government are sitting, while the representatives of the tribes are forced to stand.

### Political Measures

The enormous human and financial cost of suppressing the Iraqi Revolt generated British political consensus that direct administration was not sustainable. From 2 July to 17 October 1920, British and Indian forces suffered 876 killed or missing in action and

1,228 wounded in a conflict that the average British subject thought was long over.<sup>67</sup> Estimated Iraqi casualties were 8,450. The cost to the British government of redeploying troops, constructing fortifications, repairing damage to infrastructure, etc., exceeded £40 million.<sup>68</sup> This was more than twice the annual budget allotted for Iraq, and it was more than three times what it had cost the British government to supply the Arab Revolt during all of World War I. To prevent future occurrences, London set out to create a situation where Iraqi governance (or at least the appearance of it) would mitigate local concerns about rule by non-Muslims and allow Britain to drastically reduce its garrison. At the same time, London needed this local government to act as a means of indirect administration, protecting British regional strategic interests.

The first step toward striking the balance of such an arrangement was finding civil leadership with whom the Iraqis would work. Wilson, therefore, was no longer an acceptable agent of His Majesty's government. He had taken actions prior to the rebellion that had undermined British foreign policy and stirred up the tribes. On 11 October, as the battles were underway, Sir Percy Cox, the original Civil Administrator of Mesopotamia, relieved Wilson of leadership and assumed the title of High Commissioner.<sup>69</sup> He would have the authority to arrange an acceptable end state without the same bureaucratic interference that Wilson had faced. Cox, for instance, would report directly to the Cabinet instead of to the Government of India.<sup>70</sup> Also he would have Churchill's backing with regard to military matters, meaning that Cox would have at least unity of effort with Haldane, if not of command in practice.

Cox's primary challenge was to quickly deliver a form of government and an Arab leader that both London and the Iraqis would find satisfactory. Among several

options for leadership, the British eventually settled on Feisal, who had so recently been ousted by the French from Damascus.<sup>71</sup> Granting Feisal a throne in Iraq would support British strategic objectives in a number of ways. First, it would hopefully keep him from making any future trouble for the French in Syria. Second, it also supported the British plan to carve an area out of the Palestinian Mandate east of the Jordan River (and the modern-day West Bank) and create the Kingdom of Transjordan with Abdullah, Feisal's brother, as its emir. With the brothers ruling adjacent kingdoms, the British believed they could leverage one's behavior against the other.<sup>72</sup> In other words, each would be more amenable to British strategic interests out of fear that to do otherwise would endanger his brother's position. On a domestic level, the British expected that Feisal would be an acceptable candidate to a populace divided by religion: to the Iraqi Sunnis, he was one of their own; to the Shi'a, he had credibility in his own right as a descendent of the Prophet Muhammad and a member of the tribe traditionally granted the right to protect the Muslim holy places in Arabia. Finally, and not least among British concerns, Feisal's military experience in World War I would grant him legitimacy for building a proper Iraqi Army.



Figure 13. Coronation of Feisal at Baghdad, August 1921

*Source:* Joe Spring, *The British Mandate of Iraq, Part I*, Mustardseedblog.com, 2 July 2007, <http://mustardseedblog.com/2007/07/02/the-british-mandate-of-iraq-part-i/> (accessed 1 April 2013). High Commissioner Sir Percy Cox is pictured in white at the extreme left of the photograph. Lieutenant General Sir Aylmer Haldane is pictured to the right of the King.

In order for Britain to reach its troop reduction goals, the nascent Iraqi government would have to build forces capable of maintaining internal security. The performance of the levies during the Iraqi Revolt had been mostly poor.<sup>73</sup> In many cases, they had simply fled in the face of the enemy. In others, they had even joined with the rebels. Ideally, an Iraqi Army would be able to handle any fight within the country, with the British limited to training, advisory, logistical, and advanced fire support (such as that provided by aircraft) roles. Though British and Iraqi authorities had to resolve early disagreements over the size of ground forces and whether or not to conscript, on one matter they had important consensus: to recruit former Ottoman officers and soldiers to the greatest extent possible.<sup>74</sup> This would achieve the dual purpose of creating a

professional cadre around which to form a viable military as well as removing trained men from the body of potential opposition to the new regime. A less tangible benefit of a national army, but one of critical importance, was to serve as a national symbol of unity in a state composed of various ethnic, religious, and tribal fragments. In time the British would be able to withdraw all ground combat forces from Iraq, and nothing close to the events of 1920 would take place for over 80 years.

### Conclusions

Analysis of the Great Iraqi Revolution provides some observations about the patterns of where organized resistance did and did not break out. The primary centers of resistance were along the Euphrates west of Nasiriyya to Karbala, the Shatt al-Hay, and then later on along the Diyala, Tigris, and Euphrates north of Baghdad. Baghdad itself was relatively untouched. Despite Haldane's valid concerns about his line of communication back to Basra, the lower Tigris and Kut-Baghdad railway were also quiet, as was the lower Euphrates from Qurna to Nasiriyya. What is interesting about the lack of rebellion in these corridors were that these were the axes of advance of the British conventional campaign from 1914 to 1917. After capturing Nasiriyya, the British advanced no further up the Euphrates because of Shi'a Arab rebellions against the Ottomans extending to just south of Baghdad. The hardest fighting of the Mesopotamia Campaign had occurred up until the capture of Baghdad in March 1917, and momentum for the campaign slowed considerably after that for reasons already discussed. While some cities, such as Samarra, stand in exception, in most places where hard conventional fighting took place between British and Ottoman forces during World War I, little to no insurgency took place in 1920.

Several potential explanations exist for this. First, tribes present along the British axes of advance had the opportunity to see British combat power first hand as it defeated their former Ottoman masters. On much of the lower Euphrates, the Shatt al-Hay, and in northern Iraq, the British simply walked in after the war and set up governance without a physical imposition of will. In the eyes of the people in these regions, perhaps the British simply had not earned their respect and awe. Related to this possibility is the fact that during the conventional campaign British forces were often in conflict with the Arab tribes who lived along the way. The number of casualties sustained among the Arab tribesmen in these regions is unknown, but potentially these killings during World War I effectively reduced the lower Tigris of a male population capable of offering serious resistance in 1920.

A less violent explanation is the potential effect of British administration in the long-term. The British had been more deeply involved in the basic functions of government for a longer period of time in these relatively passive areas. By the time of the revolt, for instance, the British had been administering Basra for almost six years. The positive results of schooling, a local gendarmerie, etc., may have taken more root, having an ameliorative effect on the populations in these areas. Haldane's belief was that the lower Tigris remained quiet because of his efforts to secure the main line of supply and reinforcement, but that does not serve to explain why Nasiriyya and the tribes east of it did not also raise their banners.

In summary, this chapter has discussed the 1920 Iraqi Revolt. Administrative missteps at the strategic level and lack of military preparation served to aggravate a traditionally rebellious people. When a local uprising occurred in July, defeats of British

forces encouraged rebellion to spread throughout much of Iraq. Reinforcement, sound force protection measures, and use of combined-arms tactics that the tribes could not hope to match helped reverse the early defeats and allow the British to re-establish military control. Political reform, especially the facilitation of Arab rule and the establishment of a proper Iraqi Army, addressed many of the underlying issues of the revolt and allowed the British to execute a phased withdrawal of ground forces without a reoccurrence.

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<sup>1</sup>al-Marashi and Salama, 15.

<sup>2</sup>Timothy Paris, "British Middle East Policy-Making after the First World War: The Lawrentian and Wilsonian Schools," *The Historical Journal* 41, no. 3 (September 1998): 775.

<sup>3</sup>John Fisher, "Syria and Mesopotamia in British Middle Eastern Policy in 1919," *Middle Eastern Studies* 34, no. 2 (1998): 129.

<sup>4</sup>Ali Ibrahim al-Bashayreh, "The British Policy and Its Impact in the Implementation of the Balfour Declaration," *Asian Social Science* 8, no. 7 (June 2012): 228.

<sup>5</sup>Sharif Hussein was the Emir of Mecca, patriarch of the Hashemite tribe, and Ottoman-sanctioned protector of the Islamic holy places in the Hejaz (western Arabia). Upon declaring revolt against the Turks, he also crowned himself King of Hejaz. Sami Zubaida, "The Fragments Imagine the Nation: The Case of Iraq," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 34 (2002): 205-206.

<sup>6</sup>Paris, 775.

<sup>7</sup>Bell, 126.

<sup>8</sup>Paris, 780.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 785.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 773-775.

<sup>11</sup>al-Marashi and Salama, 15.

<sup>12</sup>Lambert, 82.

- <sup>13</sup>Bell, 74-125.
- <sup>14</sup>Paris, 779.
- <sup>15</sup>Townshend, *Desert Hell*, ch. IV-4.
- <sup>16</sup>Paris, 780.
- <sup>17</sup>Bell, 141.
- <sup>18</sup>Also called the Grand *Mujtahid*.
- <sup>19</sup>Vinogradov, 135-136.
- <sup>20</sup>Townshend, *Desert Hell*, ch. IV-8.
- <sup>21</sup>Bell, 108-110.
- <sup>22</sup>Haldane, 69-70, 315-317.
- <sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 6.
- <sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 64-72.
- <sup>25</sup>Bell, 108-110.
- <sup>26</sup>Townshend, *Desert Hell*, ch. IV-1.
- <sup>27</sup>Bell, 74-90.
- <sup>28</sup>Townshend, *Desert Hell*, ch. IV-3.
- <sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, ch. IV-10.
- <sup>30</sup>Bell, 64-65.
- <sup>31</sup>Townshend, *Desert Hell*, ch. IV-10.
- <sup>32</sup>Bell, 135-138.
- <sup>33</sup>Haldane, 32-33.
- <sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 39-44.
- <sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, and Bell, 139.
- <sup>36</sup>Haldane, 45-56.



<sup>37</sup>Townshend, *Desert Hell*, ch. IV-8.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup>Haldane, 75.

<sup>40</sup>Townshend, *Desert Hell*, ch. IV-8.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>42</sup>Darkness allowed the insurgents to close with the British and engage them without fear of their air or artillery. Night attacks tended to be most effective in the early days of the rebellion before British adjusted their tactics and formations. Townshend, *Desert Hell*, ch. IV-8; Haldane, 332-342.

<sup>43</sup>al-Marashi and Salama, 18.

<sup>44</sup>Haldane, 124.

<sup>45</sup>One reason that the insurgents were not more militarily successful was the failure of tribes to work together and coordinate attacks. Insurgents rarely worked outside of their tribal areas, and there is no evidence of even basic cooperation, such as sharing ammunition. At the rebellion's end, some tribes were completely depleted on rounds (leading Haldane to believe that was the enemy's critical requirement) while others had thousands in excess. Townshend, *Desert Hell*, ch. IV-8.

<sup>46</sup>Lieutenant Colonel Gerard Leachman was the highest-profile casualty of the uprising. He had served with distinction at Shaiba and led a cavalry squadron with the 6th Division during the first advance on Baghdad in 1915. His command was the only tactical unit able to escape the siege at Kut hours before the Ottoman cordon closed around the city. As a political officer after the war, his reputation among the British was as a tough but effective administrator. The Kurds and Arabs under his leadership however, viewed him as unnecessarily heavy-handed. Haldane, 171.

<sup>47</sup>Townshend, *Desert Hell*, ch. IV-8.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup>Vinogradov, 137.

<sup>50</sup>Haldane, 128-139.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 343.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 219.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 318-319.

<sup>55</sup>Townshend, *Desert Hell*, ch. IV-8.

<sup>56</sup>Haldane, 112.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 174-175.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 332-342.

<sup>59</sup>One exception to this restraint was at the Masjid al-Kufa, traditional site of the death of Imam Ali. The local garrison at Kufa had been under siege since July, including by the use of artillery as later described. Over the following months, RAF aircraft pounded this mosque, which was crowded not only with insurgents but also with refugees from the devastated surrounding areas. Townshend, *Desert Hell*, ch. IV-8.

<sup>60</sup>Haldane, 145.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 186.

<sup>62</sup>Townshend, *Desert Hell*, ch. IV-8.

<sup>63</sup>These figures include the crew of HMS Greenfly, a gunboat that had run aground during resupply operations on 10 August. The crew held out for a while but surrendered weeks later due to lack of food. Despite investigation, the British authorities never recovered their bodies or confirmed much about their fate. Haldane, 194-195, 225-230, 326-327.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 176-192.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 256.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 264.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 331.

<sup>68</sup>Vinogradov, 138.

<sup>69</sup>Townshend, *Desert Hell*, ch. IV-8.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., ch. IV-9.

<sup>71</sup>Zubaida, 211.

<sup>72</sup>Townshend, *Desert Hell*, ch. IV-9.

<sup>73</sup>An exception to this was those levies formed by the Assyrians, a long persecuted Christian minority in Iraq and other former Ottoman areas. The British found them useful against hostile Arab and Kurd tribesmen. Haldane, 247.

<sup>74</sup>al-Marashi and Salama, 19-28.

## CHAPTER 4

### OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

In 2003, the U.S. led a coalition effort to invade Iraq and forcibly remove the Ba'athist totalitarian regime of Saddam Hussein. American political leadership envisioned this campaign as enabling its strategic goals in GWOT by establishing a functional representative government with the rule of law in the heart of the Middle East. The operational design however, was arguably incompatible with this strategy in the sense that the campaign, though remarkably successful in a military sense, undermined the conditions necessary to achieve the desired political end state. Further, optimistic assumptions at the strategic level about how the Iraqi people would react to foreign occupation and governance were not realistic.

This chapter summarizes OIF from March 2003 to August 2004. The conventional phase of the campaign was complete in a matter of weeks, shattering the Iraqi armed forces and capturing physical objectives in a lightning manner. In the aftermath, the U.S. demonstrated that it had given little planning to post-war reconstruction and administration, and had allocated inadequate resources for doing so. An insurgency, mostly in the Sunni Arab regions, began and steadily grew over the following year. In April 2004, an uprising exploded among the Shi'a Arabs, leading to some of the deadliest days of the conflict for U.S. and coalition forces

#### Strategic Context

American political leadership envisioned OIF not as an end in its own right but as an enabling operation to the strategic ends of a world-spanning war. Following the al-

Qaeda terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the U.S. adopted a national security strategy of preemptive engagement in order to target and eliminate threats from abroad before they can cause harm to the U.S. or its allies. Worldwide efforts against al-Qaeda, other terrorist organizations, and those states believed to sponsor them would fall under the moniker “Global War on Terrorism.”<sup>1</sup> In his State of the Union Address of January 2002, U.S. President George W. Bush named Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as the three primary sources of global danger:

States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic.<sup>2</sup>

Iraq, Iran, and North Korea had little in common with one another except for totalitarian regimes, animosity toward the West, perceived support in varying degrees for transnational terrorist organizations, and alleged weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs—the development and stockpiling of nuclear, biological, or chemical arms.

Of the three states, the Bush Administration set its sights on Iraq, arguably the least threatening but also the least complicated on which to impose a military will. Iraq was an international pariah; as of 2002 it was in defiance of a number of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions, some of which dated back over 12 years and included conditions on which the 1991 Persian Gulf War was predicated.<sup>3</sup> The totalitarian Ba’athist regime had previously used chemical weapons with devastating effects against Iran and Iraqi Kurds in rebellion.<sup>4</sup> After the Gulf War, inspectors assessed that the regime’s nuclear weapons program was far more advanced than anticipated, perhaps less than two years away from a functional bomb.<sup>5</sup> Regime change (through indirect means,

such as sponsoring resistance groups) was the official foreign policy of the U.S. since 1998.<sup>6</sup> In short, the Iraqi regime had launched wars of aggression, used chemical weapons, attempted to develop nuclear weapons, thwarted international efforts at its disarmament, and stimulated the anger of American politicians to the point that facilitating Iraqi regime change was U.S. law. Given these factors, the Bush Administration believed it would be able to secure Congressional and allied support for an invasion. Additionally, 12 years of economic sanctions and punitive air strikes should have weakened the regime and its armed forces to such a degree that the U.S. and its coalition partners would be able to execute with minimal casualties.



Figure 14. Kurdish Civilian Casualties of Chemical Warfare, March 1988

*Source:* Alex Atroushi, “Bloody Friday: Chemical Massacre of the Kurds by the Iraqi Regime,” Kurdistan Democratic Party Iraq, 11 March 1994, <http://www.kdp.se/old/chemical.html> (accessed 1 May 2013). A Kurdish woman and child, allegedly killed by Iraqi armed forces using chemical weapons in March 1988. Pictures such as this were widespread in the media during 2002 and early 2003. The United States and its allies used them as evidence of the nature of Saddam Hussein’s regime.

Despite the low threat Iraq offered in the immediate future, forcible removal of the regime supported strategic objectives of GWOT. The desired strategic ends listed in the *National Security Strategy of 2002* were “political and economic freedom, peaceful relations with other states, and respect for human dignity.”<sup>7</sup> Toward these ends, national ways to achieve them included the prevention of enemies from threatening the U.S. or its allies with WMD and the expansion of political and economic liberties.<sup>8</sup> Replacing the totalitarian regime of Saddam Hussein with a representative government that adhered to the rule of law was to support this GWOT strategy. The argument was as follows: One less hostile state actor, presumably with WMD capability, would exist to threaten the U.S. or its allies; this demonstration of U.S. power should deter other potentially hostile state actors, Iran and Syria in particular, from sponsoring international terror; and the birth of individual freedom in Iraq over time should erode many of the economic and political conditions that contribute to radical Islam.

The Bush Administration spent much of 2002 and early 2003 building support among lawmakers and the international community. In October 2002, the U.S. Congress gave statutory authority to the President to execute war powers in Iraq should diplomatic and economic pressure continue to fail to bring the Iraqi regime into compliance with UNSC resolutions.<sup>9</sup> In November, the UNSC passed an additional unanimous resolution granting Iraq “a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations.”<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, the U.S. continued to build momentum for war by assembling a coalition. International support was significant enough to continue planning but was much less than it had been for the Gulf War in 1991. The U.S. provided the bulk of military forces with Australia and the United Kingdom (UK) making significant contributions of combat

troops, aircraft, and warships.<sup>11</sup> Kuwait agreed to serve as the main staging area for the invasion, though Saudi Arabia refused to allow any operations against Iraq whatsoever from its soil. Twenty-seven other states offered various levels of combat, logistical, and political support, such as Spain allowing the use of bases on its territory for transition of coalition air and ground units to Kuwait.

Final diplomatic moves occurred while forces completed their build up. A report to the UNSC on 7 March 2003 by lead inspector Hans Blix indicated incomplete cooperation with disarmament measures.<sup>12</sup> The U.S. interpreted this as a violation of the November resolution and called for a new resolution specifying the use of force without further delay, but on 10 March, France and Russia indicated that they would veto any such proposal and called for further inspections. The U.S., therefore, declared that further adjudication via the UN was pointless and that the coalition would proceed under the authority of previous resolutions.<sup>13</sup> On 17 March, President Bush delivered a final ultimatum to Iraqi dictator Hussein: he had 48 hours to enter exile with his sons, or war would follow. Hussein made no effort to leave Iraq.

### The Invasion

The coalition military task force consisted of land, air, sea, and special operations elements. General Tommy Franks, U.S. Army, was the Joint Force Commander. The land forces component was U.S. Third Army, under Lieutenant General David McKiernan. Its major subordinate commands in Kuwait were U.S. V Corps, comprised of the 3d (Mechanized) Infantry Division (ID) and 101st Airborne Division, and I Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF), reinforced by the UK 1st Armoured Division. The 4th ID (Mechanized) was also available for a secondary invasion from the north if Turkey



allowed the coalition use of its territory for such purposes. The air component was U.S. Ninth Air Force, including the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing, five U.S. Navy carrier battle groups, and a composite group of the Royal Air Force. The maritime component was U.S. Fifth Fleet, crowding the Persian Gulf with the aforementioned carrier groups, four amphibious ready groups, and several British and Australian warships. Finally, the special operations component included the 5th and 10th Special Forces Groups (SFGs).

The coalition task force planned a ground and air assault designed around shock, speed, and surprise. Franks and McKiernan identified Baghdad as the Iraqi regime's center of gravity, without physical possession of which Hussein could neither control the armed forces nor command legitimacy as a head of state.<sup>14</sup> The Iraqi regime's most dangerous course of action would be to concentrate its defenses in Baghdad's urban environment. Consequently, the campaign design was to capture Baghdad as quickly as possible, denying Iraqi forces the time to withdraw to such positions. V Corps was the main effort: 3d ID, with 5th SFG in direct support, was to punch from the west through the main line of Iraqi resistance, bypass the urban centers along the lower Euphrates, and drive straight through the Karbala Gap to Baghdad; the 101st Airborne Division would support 3d ID by securing its lines of communication back to Kuwait. I MEF was the first supporting effort: the 1st Marine Division was to secure the Rumaylah oil fields, drive from the east across the Euphrates, north up the Shatt al-Hay, and west along the north bank of the lower Tigris to the other side of Baghdad at the Diyala; British marine commandos would capture the Al Faw Peninsula by land-based and amphibious helicopter assault, and the UK 1st Armoured Division would capture the deep-water port of Umm Qasr (in order to facilitate humanitarian relief), then drive on Basra. The 10th

SFG partnered with Kurdish militia (*peshmerga*) was the second supporting effort: these forces would engage and tie down the Iraqi Army in the vicinity of Kirkuk and Mosul.<sup>15</sup> These two supporting lines of operation would fix the main elements of the Iraqi armed forces in the east and north, allowing the 3d ID to advance on Baghdad relatively unimpeded.

The Iraqi regime exercised a plan of defense in depth, relying on a combination of uncoordinated regular, irregular, and militarized regime security units. The regime evaluated threats primarily in terms of its own continued grip on power in Iraq, not necessarily in terms of protecting the state or people.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, it interpreted the greatest risk as being internal, either by coup or popular uprising; followed by Iran; and followed only then by the U.S. and its allies. The Iraqi national security strategy was based around these assumptions.<sup>17</sup> Centered on Baghdad, the outer line of defense was held by 17 divisions of the regular Iraqi Army, populated mostly with Shi'a conscripts. The regime trusted these units to protect Iraq from external threats, but they remained stationed far from the capital itself to reduce the risk of a coup. The Republican Guard held the next line of defense and also served as a counter-coup force. These eight main divisions formed a protective ring around Baghdad but not inside the capital itself. These units were mostly Sunni volunteers, and better equipped than their counterparts in the regular army. The Special Republican Guard manned the last physical line of defense inside of Baghdad. It consisted of six brigades, mostly of members of Hussein's clan, from the region around Tikrit, and served as a counter-coup force against the main Republican Guard. A supplemental form of defense was irregular fighters, primarily the Fidayin Saddam, a 20,000-strong militia sponsored and armed by the regime. Its presence

was mostly in the cities south and east of the capital, where it was to serve the dual purpose of watching over the Shi'a population in case there was a repeat of the 1991 rebellion.

The coalition task force achieved surprise by executing offensive ground operations far earlier than the Iraqi leadership anticipated. Hussein and his generals believed that once the war began, weeks of airstrikes would precede any land invasion.<sup>18</sup> Recent history supported this assumption. During the 1991 war, 38 days of air shaping and preparations had taken place before coalition ground forces advanced into Iraq and Kuwait.<sup>19</sup> The more recent U.S. and NATO war against Serbia in 1999 involved 78 days of bombing, at the end of which a ground invasion was not necessary.<sup>20</sup> In the early hours of 20 March 2003, OIF began with a series of stealth fighter and cruise missile strikes targeting the Iraqi political leadership, including Hussein and his sons.<sup>21</sup> The strikes were unsuccessful. The Iraqi armed forces retaliated throughout the day with surface-to-surface missile attacks on assumed coalition positions in Kuwait; these resulted in no casualties or significant damage. The ground war commenced that evening, hours earlier than planned due to intelligence that the regime was making preparations to destroy the Rumaylah oil fields.<sup>22</sup> The Iraqi Army units in the vicinity of the border were caught entirely off guard, having not prepared or moved into proper defensive positions. Air attacks destroyed those military vehicles that attempted any movement in the open. Consequently, V Corps and I MEF easily overran points of resistance and captured their initial objectives.

The coalition encountered two major surprises of its own during the first stages of invasion. First, regular units of the Iraqi Army were not capitulating wholesale as hoped

during planning. The coalition intelligence services had invested time and effort in the months beforehand persuading Iraqi Army leaders not to fight for their regime and giving instructions on how to surrender without being engaged with deadly force.<sup>23</sup> When Iraqi regular forces encountered coalition ground forces, they were completely outclassed in terms of technology, firepower, training, and morale. Nevertheless, contrary to pre-war assumptions, the Iraqi Army was fighting back with all of the means available to it. After suffering defeat or becoming isolated, individual Iraqi soldiers surrendered or deserted among the civilian populace, but no wholesale capitulations of units occurred. Second, irregular fighters were causing the coalition far more problems than anticipated. Planning estimates barely accounted for the Saddam Fidayin relative to the regular and Republican Guard divisions. Fidayin members fought in civilian clothes and rode in civilian vehicles, some of which had mounted crew-served weapons. Their brazen attacks on coalition forces were inconsistent with intelligence reports, often with deadly or at least disruptive effect. For example, the first coalition casualty of OIF was a U.S. Marine lieutenant killed in action by irregulars who drove up to his platoon's position in a pickup truck and began firing.<sup>24</sup> These unexpected factors meant that not only would the coalition ground forces not have the Iraqi formations they had hoped for to immediately aid with post-war security, but also that unless V Corps and I MEF adapted, Fidayin would threaten the lines of communication.<sup>25</sup>

A combination of Fidayin attacks, poor weather, and logistical reach generated a pause in coalition ground offensive operations. Third Army's campaign plan was for its major subordinate units to bypass urban areas on the road to Baghdad. However, in the early hours of 23 March a lightly armed supply convoy of the 507th Maintenance

Company took a wrong turn into Nasiriyya and became heavily engaged by elements of Fidayin and the Iraqi Army 11th Division, resulting in 11 U.S. soldiers killed, six captured, and many more wounded.<sup>26</sup> I MEF tasked the 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade (Task Force Tarawa) with assaulting Nasiriyya in order to rescue members of the 507th still trapped in the city. The Marines encountered stiff resistance, mostly from the Fidayin, and suffered nearly 20 deaths and 60 wounded between 23 and 27 March, including a significant friendly fire incident. The 3-7 Cavalry Squadron of 3d ID encountered similar unexpected resistance in the vicinity of Samawa.<sup>27</sup>

On 25 March, a massive sand storm covered most of Iraq for the next two days.<sup>28</sup> This had the effect of reducing visibility to the point that helicopters could not fly, meaning no rotary wing close air support, casualty evacuation, or resupply would be available until the storm lifted. Coalition ground forces executed an operational pause, using the poor weather as an opportunity to consolidate their bridgeheads across the Euphrates, re-evaluate the threat of Iraqi irregular forces, reinforce lines of communication, and attrite Iraqi conventional forces and communications nodes with high-level precision bombing. The Iraqi regime misinterpreted this pause and inflated reports from Samawa and Nasiriyya as a sign that it was winning the war. This contributed to Hussein ignoring pleas from his most talented general, II Republican Guard Corps Commander Raad Majid al-Hamdani, to reinforce the gap between Karbala and Lake Razaza, which Hamdani correctly assessed as the coalition's most likely avenue of approach to Baghdad.<sup>29</sup>



Figure 15. Marines Fighting on Urban Terrain at Nasiriyya, March 2003

*Source:* Michael Wilson, “Fighting Continues in Nasiriyah, Nicknamed ‘Ambush Alley’,” FreeRepublic.com, 24 March 2003, <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/874142/posts> (accessed 1 May 2013). Marines of Task Force Tarawa conducting operations in Nasiriyya. At the time, planners believed this urban combat would characterize the battle for Baghdad on a much larger scale. That did not come to pass. However, the tactics that Marines encountered here from irregular forces were consistent with those seen during much of the post-war insurgency.

Ground offensive operations resumed when the weather lifted, and both arms of Third Army pushed to the outskirts of Baghdad in a matter of days. In the west, with the aid of overwhelming air power, the 3d ID overran Republican Guard resistance in the Karbala Gap and captured Baghdad International Airport on 4 April.<sup>30</sup> The 101st Airborne Division secured V Corps’ lines of communication and fixed remaining elements of the Republican Guard and Fidayin in the vicinity of Najaf, Hilla, and Karbala. In the east, the 1st Marine Division had secured a bridgehead over the Tigris on 2 April and was at the east bank of the Diyala.<sup>31</sup> The Iraqi armed forces were unable to

coordinate an effective defense against either coalition thrust. The tempo of the mutually supporting coalition offensives, its overwhelming air power, and the corrosive effect of totalitarian penetration on the Iraqi forces created a situation where they could not optimally deploy to defend Baghdad.<sup>32</sup> Airstrikes against command and control nodes interrupted communications from higher commands, and they quickly destroyed any military vehicles maneuvering in open terrain. Further, because Hussein's pre-war national security strategy mitigated a coup more than an existential threat, adjacent units were not allowed to coordinate with one another or with supporting arms. The main Republican Guard divisions were also unable to take the initiative to withdraw under enemy pressure because of proscriptions on their being in or near Baghdad. These control measures, designed to ensure the survival of the regime, instead generated a more rapid collapse as coalition forces converged on the capital.

Initial forays of coalition troops into Baghdad discovered evidence that the Iraqi regime was losing its grip on power more quickly than anticipated, causing Third Army to set aside pre-war plans for the capital and order its immediate capture. The course of action estimated to be the most dangerous by the Iraqi regime was to use eight divisions of the Republican Guard and six brigades of the Special Republican Guard to defend inside of Baghdad, forcing the coalition to conduct a slow, bloody urban assault that maximized U.S. and civilian casualties as well as damage to infrastructure. The 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade's experience in Nasiriyya supported this assumption. Third Army intended to mitigate this by cordoning off the capital and establishing a series of bases from which to conduct targeted ground raids into the city and erode the Iraqi regime's power.<sup>33</sup> On 5 April, 1-64, a tank battalion with the 3d ID's 2d Brigade

Combat Team, executed an armored raid into the heart of Baghdad and returned to Baghdad International Airport that same day with minimal casualties.<sup>34</sup> Resistance had been fierce but mostly disorganized, consisting of uncoordinated elements of Fidayin and Special Republican Guard. On the following day, the entire brigade advanced into and captured the government district. Instead of returning to the airport however, the brigade commander assessed that the regime was failing and took the initiative to hold and fortify Hussein's seat of power. On that same day in the east, the 1st Marine Division crossed the Diyala River and found much of the same evidence that Hussein's power was crumbling; pockets of loyal regime troops were fighting, but on the whole resistance was fading.<sup>35</sup> Baghdad was virtually an open city. On 8 and 9 April, the 3d ID and 1st Marine Division exploited this opportunity and marched into the capital from west and east, making physical contact and establishing boundaries at the Tigris.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, in the south the UK 1st Armoured Division captured Basra on 7 April.<sup>37</sup>





Figure 16. 3d Infantry Division Enters Baghdad from the West, April 2003

*Source:* Mason Lowery, *On Point—The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom*, GlobalSecurity.org, 2004, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2004/onpoint/ch-6.htm> (accessed 1 May 2013). Elements of the 2d Brigade Combat Team, 3d Infantry Division capture the government quarter on 6 April 2003. These soldiers are crossing under the Swords of Qadisiyya, a monument commemorating Hussein’s “victory” over Iran in 1988.



Figure 17. 1st Marine Division Enters Baghdad from the East, April 2003

*Source:* Marine Parents, “Marine Moms and Dads,” 2007, <http://www.marineparents.com/usmc/events-diyala.asp> (accessed 1 May 2013). I MEF attacks across a bridgehead on the Diyala River on 6 April.

While the 3d ID and 1st Marine Division established military control in the capital, the final phases of the conventional campaign occurred in the north. *Peshmerga* supported by the 10th SFG and coalition airpower captured Kirkuk and Mosul on 10 and 11 April, respectively.<sup>38</sup> The 173d Airborne Brigade had parachuted into Bashur Airfield on 26 March and began assisting with security and stability operations in Kirkuk on 10 April. Elements of the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit flew into Mosul to do the same. The coalition political leadership feared that the *peshmerga*, intoxicated by its recent combat success, might march on Tikrit, the ancestral home of Saddam Hussein in the Sunni Arab heartland. To mitigate the risk that the Kurds would settle old scores and massacre the inhabitants, Third Army rapidly put together a force to get there first. The 1st Marine Division assembled its three light armored reconnaissance battalions into Task Force Tripoli, which conducted a 110-mile road march and captured Tikrit with minimal resistance on 14 April.<sup>39</sup> Along the way, near Samara, elements of Task Force Tripoli discovered and liberated American prisoners of war, most of whom the Iraqi armed forces had captured at Nasiriyya in late March.

In total, the conventional campaign from Kuwait to Tikrit lasted 27 days. Nearly 467,000 coalition personnel deployed for OIF, including those assigned to ships and regional bases.<sup>40</sup> Of these, less than 250,000 were part of land component forces that entered Iraq.<sup>41</sup> The coalition suffered 125 combat fatalities during March and April.<sup>42</sup> Iraqi deaths were between 4,875 and 6,370, based on observations and reports.<sup>43</sup> Hussein, his sons, and most of the regime leadership evaded coalition capture for the moment.<sup>44</sup> Despite intelligence estimates, the Iraqi armed forces never attempted to use WMD, and

the coalition would never discover any caches of the weapons or evidence of active programs.

### Rise of the Sunni Insurgency

With the key terrain under coalition control and Hussein's regime in flight, Third Army transitioned to security and stability operations. While in some places Iraqis openly celebrated the fall of the Ba'athist regime, looting and violence were also rampant in urban areas, Baghdad in particular.<sup>45</sup> In Sunni-majority regions, hostile demonstrations against the coalition were prevalent. The 3d ID relieved the elements of the 1st Marine Division east of the Tigris and assumed responsibility for all of Baghdad.<sup>46</sup> The 4th ID, which had arrived in Kuwait in early April, relieved Task Force Tripoli in place and established battle space in the Sunni areas along the Diyala and upper Tigris, including the cities of Tikrit, Samara, and Baquba. The 101st Airborne Division assumed responsibility for northern Iraq, including Mosul and Kirkuk. Elements of the 82d Airborne occupied portions of Anbar Province along the upper Euphrates, including the Sunni cities of Fallujah and Ramadi. I MEF, having consolidated its forces from Baghdad and Tikrit, assumed most of the battle space in the Shi'a-majority areas, including Kut on the lower Tigris and Karbala, Najaf, and Nasiriyya in the vicinity of the lower Euphrates. British forces remained in southeastern Iraq, including the cities of Amara and Basra.

The coalition established civil and military authorities for post-war reconstruction and security. The civil authority was originally the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance, renamed the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) on 21 April. Retired U.S. Army General Jay Garner was the head of this organization during the fall of Baghdad but fell out of favor with the Bush Administration due to embarrassing

widespread lawlessness in late April (well before any effects of his administration could have taken place) and because of rumored disagreements on key policy.<sup>47</sup> Ambassador L. Paul Bremer, who had been mostly uninvolved with pre-war civil planning, assumed leadership on 11 May with full executive powers for Iraq, reporting to President Bush via the Secretary of Defense.<sup>48</sup> To give his administration an Iraqi face, on 25 July Bremer appointed an Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), consisting of representatives of some political factions that had existed in Iraq prior to the invasion, but also of several Iraqi exiles who had supported the coalition but held little influence inside the country, such as Ahmed Chalabi and Iyad Allawi.<sup>49</sup> The IGC had no actual authority for the present as Bremer maintained veto power over any of their decisions he deemed unwise. U.S. Central Command established CJTF-7 from V Corps headquarters to replace Third Army in commanding and controlling the divisions executing stability operations in Iraq. Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, who had also not been involved with pre-war planning, assumed command of CJTF-7 in June. The U.S. Department of Defense established that CJTF-7 would be in “direct support” of the CPA instead of a command relationship wherein Bremer would have had formal authority over Sanchez. The coalition strategy consisted of four lines of effort: governance, economic, essential services, and security.<sup>50</sup> CJTF-7 would be the lead organization for security and support the CPA with the remaining lines.

Throughout the summer and fall, CJTF-7 progressively lost strength on the ground due to withdrawals and lower-quality replacements. If the U.S. applied the same force ratio of personnel to population that it had exercised during peace operations in Kosovo, then 480,000 troops would have been necessary to stabilize Iraq.<sup>51</sup> U.S. forces

peaked at less than 250,000 in 2003, and these included those forces due to rotate out of Iraq at the earliest opportunity. The 3d ID, exhausted from its hard drive to Baghdad and the wide-area security operations that followed, was the first division to depart after being relieved by the U.S. 1st Armored Division (AD). The Bush Administration planned for allied nations to replace U.S. forces where possible. It was more successful in generating international support for this than it had been for the invasion. Now that regime change in Iraq was a fait accompli, the members of the UNSC adopted a series of unanimous resolutions that vacated most of the previous punitive sanctions against Iraq, established a UN aid mission, and authorized a multinational peacekeeping force.<sup>52</sup> Poland agreed to contribute a brigade and lead a multinational division that included Ukrainian, Spanish, and Central American troops.<sup>53</sup> By October, this division relieved I MEF at Kut, Karbala, Najaf, and Diwaniyya. Italy also deployed a brigade that served in Nasiriyya under a British divisional command. However, these multinational forces were of widely differing capabilities and in many cases had very restrictive rules of engagement, diminishing their effectiveness in security operations. CJTF-7, already inadequately manned relative to previous stability operations, was not only losing strength in terms of raw numbers but also in those of actual capabilities per soldier.

Early in his administration, Bremer made two executive decisions that were counterproductive to the lines of effort for stability in Iraq. On 16 May, Bremer ordered the Ba'ath Party dissolved and its former members removed from all government positions.<sup>54</sup> Despite the good intentions of purging those who had facilitated Hussein's totalitarian rule, this order had the effect of terminating many of the professionals and civil servants who would be necessary to reconstruct and administer the country. The

Ba'ath Party had been in power since 1968 and deeply penetrated most aspects of society. Many of its former members included those with the resident knowledge of Iraq's existent structures and networks, including those best suited to restore electricity, communications, and education.<sup>55</sup> On 23 May, Bremer disbanded many Iraqi institutions that existed prior to the CPA, not only those that had served to prop up the former regime, such as the Republican Guard, but also the regular armed forces.<sup>56</sup> Though most of the surviving personnel of the Iraqi armed forces had deserted in the final days of the invasion, this order eliminated hopes of many Iraqis for returning to their livelihoods under the new authority. Those who were already retired would maintain their pensions, but many career soldiers who had still been on active duty at the time of the invasion would be left with nothing for their service. In the eyes of Bremer, the Iraqi Army may have been a symbol of the old regime, but to most Iraqis it represented the shield of the nation, long predating Hussein and the Ba'ath.<sup>57</sup> Disbanding their army struck many Iraqis as the act of an imperial power forcing its will on a colony. With two signatures, Bremer had alienated many Iraqis; significantly reduced the expertise and manpower he would need to restore order and essential services; and left hundreds of thousands of young men with no money, nothing to do, and no stake in a new Iraq.

Oppressive tactics by some units conducting stability operations in these early stages may have exacerbated hostile feelings among the Sunni Arabs. The term "Sunni Triangle" refers to the densely populated area north and west of Baghdad, including the cities of Tikrit and Samara on the upper Tigris, as well as Fallujah and Ramadi on the upper Euphrates. Much of Iraq's Sunni Arab minority was concentrated here, and in general they viewed the CPA with apprehension if not outright hostility. After all, the

Ba'athist regime may have represented a reign of terror for the Shi'a and Kurds, but in general the Sunni benefited from Hussein's leadership. The 101st Airborne, I MEF, and British division exercised tactical restraint in accordance with the guidance of their commanders.<sup>58</sup> Within these zones of control, which included the Shi'a and Kurdish regions, the populations were relatively peaceful and cooperative during the summer of 2003. The divisions controlling the Sunni Triangle however, quickly gained reputations for being unnecessarily heavy-handed.<sup>59</sup> The 4th ID, which did not arrive in northern Iraq until after Task Force Tripoli captured Tikrit, nevertheless "fought" into its battle space, firing at long abandoned military vehicles without coordinating with Marines already present. Soldiers of the 4th ID also engaged in command-sponsored questionable tactics, such as holding hostage the innocent relatives of suspected insurgents or criminals. Soldiers of the 82d Airborne in Fallujah fired into mass protests on 28 and 30 April, killing 13 civilians and wounding 91 more. Fallujah would later become the physical center of the Sunni insurgency. The 101st Airborne's success in the Sunni Arab areas under its control suggests that a more moderate approach in the Sunni Triangle would have yielded better results. The wide disparity between tactics exercised among the different divisions arguably indicates that CJTF-7 had not issued proper guidance to major subordinate commands and also failed to supervise them.

Violent demonstrations, criminal activity, and attacks on coalition troops rose throughout the summer until an undeniable insurgency was raging by fall. Former Ba'athists and members of al-Qaeda intent on causing trouble did not have to look far for arms or unemployed young men. Weapons and explosives were widely available because of their abandonment during the invasion and the fact that there were insufficient

coalition forces present to guard ASPs and armories across Iraq. Hussein had emptied his prisons in the fall of 2002 as a war measure, so thousands of career criminals were everywhere, willing to steal arms and explosive materials for pay.<sup>60</sup> Former members of the Fidayin, Republican Guard, and regular armed forces provided a body of men without immediate prospects and who had a degree of military training. Consequently, the summer of 2003 saw the beginnings of armed resistance against the CPA. Insurgents, mostly in the Sunni Triangle, targeted coalition troops and convoys with small arms fire and IEDs; damaged critical infrastructure, such as the already unstable electrical grid and oil pipelines; and assassinated those Iraqis who appeared to cooperate with the CPA.<sup>61</sup> In June, Bremer advised Washington that troop withdrawals may have gone too far. By July, General John Abizaid, who had recently assumed leadership of Central Command from Franks, stated that the coalition was facing a “classical guerilla-type campaign” in Iraq.<sup>62</sup> In August, al-Qaeda conducted catastrophic bombings at the UN headquarters and Imam Ali Mosque (as described in chapter 1).



Figure 18. Aftermath of Baghdad UN Headquarters Bombing, August 2003

*Source:* “Top UN Official among Dead in Baghdad Blast,” *The Guardian*, 13 August 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/aug/19/iraq1> (accessed 7 May 2013). Aftermath of an al-Qaeda vehicle-borne bombing that destroyed the headquarters of the UN aid mission on 13 August 2003.



As the insurgency grew, casualties mounted, particularly for U.S. soldiers in the Sunni Triangle. By the end of October, more coalition personnel were dead from insurgent activity than had been killed during the entire conventional campaign.<sup>63</sup> November, with 110 fatalities, was the single deadliest month of 2003 and would not be exceeded until the following April, when insurgency escalated into a general uprising against the CPA and CJTF-7.

### Spring Rebellion

April and May of 2004 was arguably the nadir of coalition operations during OIF. In the months following the fall of Baghdad, Muqtada al-Sadr, a 30-year-old cleric, rose to meteoric influence over a significant portion of Shi'a Iraqis. He became the spiritual leader of a militia whose numbers and power swelled throughout Baghdad and southern Iraq in the months following the fall of Hussein. When the CPA became decisively engaged by the Sunni insurgency, al-Sadr saw an opportunity and called on his militia to rebel against the occupying power. This revolt, combined with uprisings in the Sunni Triangle, caused chaos and destruction across Iraq and severe political damage for those governments actively supporting OIF. The CPA eventually re-established an acceptable degree of control but only at the price of devastating casualties and compromises that would have been unthinkable only months before.

Al-Sadr rose to prominence in a power vacuum that followed the disintegration of the Ba'ath in southern Iraq. During the coalition invasion, predicted uprisings among the Shi'a against Hussein never occurred. The U.S. had failed to support such revolts in 1991, following Hussein's defeat in the Gulf War, despite President George H. W. Bush twice calling for them publicly.<sup>64</sup> The Iraqi armed forces put down the rebellion in a

brutal fashion, killing thousands indiscriminately, and the U.S. did nothing to assist the Shi'a Iraqis. In 2003, this perception of previous abandonment caused many Shi'a to adopt a wait-and-see approach with the coalition. Al-Sadr, who was mostly an unknown figure until that summer, skillfully exploited the paranoia of Shi'a Iraqis who distrusted the foreign, non-Muslim CPA as much as they had hated the Ba'ath. With no accomplishments of his own, al-Sadr relied on his family name to build support.<sup>65</sup> Despite early overtures to the CPA, Bremer did not seriously consider appointing al-Sadr to the IGC. Al-Sadr used his exclusion from the political process to discredit those who had joined, particularly the Iraqi exiles. He preached that only those who had suffered through the dark days of Hussein should have any say in Iraq's future, and that those who cooperated with the CPA were aiding occupiers, not liberators.<sup>66</sup> As early as June 2003, some coalition intelligence analysts were beginning to see unrest among the Shi'a as the most dangerous possible trend in Iraq. After all, the Shi'a Arabs were over 60 percent of the population, and the CPA was already having difficulty controlling a Sunni minority of around 13 percent. According to Sir John Sawers, the UK representative to the CPA:

In the medium term, my main concern is the Shi'a. The continued problem with security and essential services means that moderate Shi'a leaders are coming under pressure as their communities question whether supporting the Coalition is the right approach. Meanwhile, the Iranians are adding to their options in Iraq by cultivating the young Najaf radical, Muqtada al-Sadr, and that is worrying the moderate clerics. [Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq], the pro-Iran party we are working with, are facing some tricky decisions. Iraqis remain resistant to Iranian attempts to exert influence. But the biggest threat in the next year is that, for a mix of reasons, we lose the Shi'a heartlands.<sup>67</sup>

The CPA would not be able to achieve its intended end state until it found a way to bring the Sunni into the fold, but the fastest way to lose everything was if the Shi'a were to turn. The current Grand Ayatollah of Iraq, Ali al-Sistani, adopted a strategy of ignoring

al-Sadr, but al-Sadr's influence continued to grow along with the CPA's failures to provide security and restore essential services.<sup>68</sup>

Al-Sadr was able to convert rhetoric into potential force with the establishment of a large and well-armed militia, the JAM (as described in chapter 1). Its leadership benefitted from the same surplus of weapons and manpower that sustained Sunni insurgent groups. Cancellation of scheduled elections fed the paranoia of Shi'a Muslims and pushed more young men into al-Sadr's ranks. In Najaf, for instance, voter registration and campaigning to elect a mayor had been in progress with a high degree of local interest when Bremer ordered the election indefinitely postponed.<sup>69</sup> He feared that a candidate unfriendly to the CPA would win. Actions such as these fed al-Sadr's narrative that the foreigners were not really in Iraq to bring its people political freedom. Al-Qaeda's successful attack on the Imam Ali Mosque on 29 August (chapter 1) also played into al-Sadr's hands about the legitimacy of the CPA: clearly, only dedicated members of the faithful could protect Iraq's holy sites. Membership in the JAM swelled, and the militia gradually pushed out nascent Iraqi security forces working in Karbala, Najaf, and Sadr City.<sup>70</sup> The militia formed a shadow government in many areas of Shi'a Iraq with al-Sadr at its head.

In late March and early April 2004, Fallujah escalated from a hotbed of insurgency to a city in revolt against the CPA. By fall 2003, CJTF-7 recognized the mistake it had made tasking so few forces with stability operations in the Anbar Province, including the urban areas of Ramadi and Fallujah. In February 2004, I MEF returned to Iraq and relieved elements of the 82d Airborne.<sup>71</sup> The Marine leadership was optimistic that the restraint it had exercised in the Shi'a areas the year before would help turn the

tide of violence, but it was prepared for a fight if necessary. Events of 31 March brought that necessity. Insurgents in Fallujah ambushed and murdered four American private security contractors, and the townspeople celebrated in the streets while the Americans bodies were hanged from a bridge.<sup>72</sup> Against the advice of Marine generals, Bremer and Sanchez ordered a full military assault on the city to capture or kill those responsible for the murders and as a show of force against future attacks. When Marine battalions began to close with Fallujah on 3 April, more than 2,000 men at arms rose to defend it, including those from surrounding villages. The Marines risked enormous casualties unless they used the full complement of combined arms at their disposal, including tanks and air strikes. The resulting carnage was a public relations disaster for the CPA. The Sunni members of the IGC threatened to resign if an immediate ceasefire did not take place.<sup>73</sup> On 9 April, with military objectives incomplete, Sanchez ordered I MEF to cease offensive operations. Sunni insurgents claimed a victory over the CPA.

Al-Sadr took advantage of the situation in Anbar Province and provocative moves by the CPA to launch an uprising by his JAM throughout southern Iraq. Before the situation in Fallujah reached a point of crisis, Bremer had taken a number of steps to rein in al-Sadr's corrosive influence.<sup>74</sup> On 28 March, the CPA closed al-Sadr's newspaper, *al-Hawza*, which had served as a vehicle for inciting violence against coalition troops and those Iraqis supporting them. On 2 April, it arrested Mustafa Yaqoubi, a key JAM lieutenant, and attempted to execute a warrant against al-Sadr himself for the April 2003 murder of Ayatollah Sayed al-Khoei.<sup>75</sup> On 4 April, al-Sadr called for an end to non-violent measures, using language interpreted as directing the JAM into armed rebellion against the coalition.<sup>76</sup> To his followers, this statement had the force of a *fatwa*.

Thousands of JAM militiamen attacked in Sadr City and across southern Iraq. For soldiers of the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division, who had recently assumed responsibility in Baghdad, 4 April 2004 would become known as “Black Sunday.”<sup>77</sup> Eight soldiers lost their lives and 50 more suffered serious injuries when a routine convoy came under attack. The fighting escalated and spread across Sadr City; battalion commanders had to hastily assemble combat support soldiers to act as provisional riflemen in order to break through to isolated units. JAM brazenly attacked CJTF-7 bases as well as the compounds of Iraqi police and security forces, then known as the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC). Such an attack forced Ukrainian and Polish forces to abandon the city of Kut.<sup>78</sup> JAM also captured key terrain in the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala and conducted simultaneous, coordinated attacks in Hilla, Nasiriyya, Amara, and Basra.<sup>79</sup> These events were coupled with large-scale violence in the Sunni cities of Samara, Baquba, and Ramadi as well as the ongoing siege at Fallujah. CJTF-7 found difficulty in massing forces to counter insurgent moves in any given area because logistical convoys were subject to increasingly complex attacks and required armed escort without additional attachments of dedicated combat units. For example, I MEF assessed that the greatest threat to continued operations at Fallujah was its vulnerable lines of communication.<sup>80</sup> In a matter of days, most of Iraq had broken out in open revolt and coalition forces were spread perilously thin.

Collaboration between Sunni and Shi’a, the fracturing of the coalition, and poor performance of the ICDC eroded the legitimacy of the CPA during these days. The desired political end states of the major armed factions—al-Qaeda, JAM, and former Ba’athists—could not have been further apart in their aims. Nevertheless, political and

logistical cooperation between Sunni and Shi'a elements fighting the CPA was evident.<sup>81</sup> Mass protests east of Fallujah included large numbers of Shi'a supporters waving al-Sadr propaganda. Sunni neighborhoods in Sadr City aided the JAM with food and by assisting with the construction of barricades. A late April poll indicated that 89 percent of Iraqis now thought of the coalition as an occupying power.<sup>82</sup> Additionally, a new government in Spain was withdrawing its troops from Iraq during the worst of the fighting.<sup>83</sup> Without Spanish command and control, all Central American countries except El Salvador followed suit and pulled their forces as well. Finally, and perhaps worst of all, the ICDC was failing across the board in the face of any combat against their countrymen. Of four such battalions supposed to accompany I MEF into Fallujah, only 70 Iraqi soldiers fought.<sup>84</sup> The remainder either refused orders or deserted. During April, the available ICDC dropped from approximately 5,600 to 2,400, mostly due to desertions.<sup>85</sup> More important than the tactical results of individual engagements, the CPA was now rapidly losing the narrative.



Figure 19. Attack of *Jaysh al-Mahdi* Militiamen in Sadr City, April 2004

*Source:* Ed Marek, *Black Sunday in Sadr City, 4 April 2004*, TalkingProud.us, 8 November 2004, [http://www.talkingproud.us/Retired/Retired/BlackSundaySadr\\_files/black-sunday-in-sadr-city.pdf](http://www.talkingproud.us/Retired/Retired/BlackSundaySadr_files/black-sunday-in-sadr-city.pdf) (accessed 6 May 2013), 25. On 5 April 2004, JAM militiamen celebrate in Sadr City, Baghdad, with a burning 1st Cavalry Division vehicle in the background.

The CPA re-established control through a combination of military pressure and negotiation. CJTF-7 temporarily had additional ground forces at its disposal through the extension of troops scheduled to rotate out of Iraq. The 1st AD, which after a year in Iraq had transferred responsibility for Baghdad to the 1st Cavalry Division, received orders extending its tour for three months.<sup>86</sup> Soldiers of the 1st AD were instrumental in providing a mobile force to recapture lost terrain, such as Kut on 11 April, and shore up garrisons under siege as necessary. Other than the 11th and 24th Marine Expeditionary Units, which would arrive that summer to more or less replace capabilities lost during the Spanish withdrawal, no strategic reinforcements would come from the U.S. that had not already been earmarked for service in OIF. The various divisions also adjusted tactics for protecting convoys and detailed strong forces to guard key intersections along supply

routes.<sup>87</sup> These actions served to secure the coalition lines of communication and reduce the mobility of insurgent groups to keep them from mutually supporting one another. With some ground recaptured and supply routes restored, Bremer negotiated to end most of the uprising before a catastrophic loss of political support crippled the CPA's remaining legitimacy. In Fallujah on 25 April, I MEF pulled back from its siege and temporarily transferred responsibility to a "brigade" of insurgents led by a former Iraqi general.<sup>88</sup> On 6 June, with thousands of JAM militiamen killed in the fighting and holding very little ground outside of Najaf, al-Sadr agreed to direct a ceasefire.<sup>89</sup> The coalition suffered 274 more fatalities during this period.<sup>90</sup> April 2004, with 131 lives lost in combat, would be the single worst month due to enemy activity of all OIF through 2011.

### Aftermath

The Spring Revolt of 2004 forced the CPA and CJTF-7 to enact a number of reforms in order to mitigate a repeat. Politically, negotiating a ceasefire was a victory of sorts. Several members of IGC protested and threatened to resign in the early days of battle, but in the end all but one remained at their posts.<sup>91</sup> If Bremer had not been able to hold them together, the CPA would not have had the legitimacy to transition authority to Iraqi leadership.<sup>92</sup> On 28 May, while the revolt was still in progress, the IGC selected exile Iyad Allawi, a secular Shi'a, as interim prime minister of a new government.<sup>93</sup> On 8 June, the UNSC recognized the sovereignty of the pending Iraqi state.<sup>94</sup> On 28 June, two days ahead of schedule, Bremer transferred power to the interim government, which would operate until nationwide elections scheduled for the following January.<sup>95</sup> The CPA dissolved, and Bremer departed Iraq on that same day. While these events did not end the



fighting, coalition forces now operated in Iraq at the invitation of its government, undermining the insurgent narrative about occupying powers. In the months and years that followed, Multi-National Force–Iraq (formerly CJTF-7) would execute a number of large-scale urban operations to clear insurgent enclaves, some of which remained from the rebellion and some of which sprang up in the aftermath. All such missions were subject to the permission and supervision of the Iraqi government, a condition that did not exist under the CPA.

From a military perspective, the battle was indecisive. At its end insurgents still held free reign in Fallujah, Ramadi, Najaf, and Samarra, among other areas. Additionally, even if the coalition could not claim a definitive victory, the Sunni and Shi'a fighters who had stood up to the advanced Western powers were convinced that they had won. The coalition military leadership did learn valuable lessons about protecting its lines of communication and not becoming so spread out that it could ill-afford to mass against a single objective. Future offensive battles in Iraq would be characterized by isolating an insurgent enclave; building up logistics and forces in advance; and executing a deliberate, methodical operation to clear, hold, and rebuild. Multi-National Force–Iraq executed successful versions of this template at Najaf in August, Samarra in October, and Fallujah in November.<sup>96</sup> Arguably, the most important revelation by the coalition was the need for committed and well-trained Iraqi security forces. Building these became the main effort for the long-term security of Iraq, even above direct combat with insurgents. Beginning that August, Iraqi battalions fought with growing strength and confidence in each of the above listed engagements.<sup>97</sup> Success came very slowly however, and the last coalition combat forces did not depart Iraq until December 2011.<sup>98</sup> As of that time, 4,487 U.S.

personnel had lost their lives in Iraq with over 30,000 more wounded. Iraqi casualty estimates are as high as 150,000, 80 percent of whom were civilians.

### Conclusions

In closing, this chapter has summarized OIF from March 2003 to June 2004. The Bush Administration proposed the campaign in Iraq to the people of the U.S. and the international community as a supporting operation to long-term national security objectives. It argued that the world would be safer if Hussein's regime were replaced with a representative government built on the rule of the law. Military planners designed the campaign around faulty intelligence and assumptions, most glaringly that the Hussein regime had and would use WMDs as well as that the regular Iraqi Army (and Shi'a civil population) would welcome coalition forces and even fight alongside them. Furthermore, while the conventional campaign achieved its military objectives in a rapid manner, some elements of its design were inconsistent with and even at cross-purposes to the strategic goals involved. The targeted disintegration of the regime's command and control network allowed coalition ground forces to advance rapidly without fear of coordination between elements of the Iraqi armed forces. During the stability phase however, this destruction generated enormous difficulties in re-establishing local security forces and essential services. In short, the campaign created an instant failed state.

The CPA aggravated unstable conditions with ill-advised decisions to proscribe the Ba'ath Party and Iraqi armed forces, alienating large groups of people who would have been useful in the early days to lines of effort in governance, economics, essential services, and security. These judgments, coupled with insufficient security forces and heavy-handed tactics in some divisions, arguably contributed to a mostly Sunni

insurgency that grew over the summer of 2003 and peaked in the spring of 2004 with a full-scale rebellion, including large elements of the Shi'a majority Military pressure and political maneuvering ended the revolt in June, giving the CPA breathing room to transfer authority to the IGC. In partnership with this sovereign Iraqi government, coalition forces began necessary political and military reforms in the summer of 2004 that would slowly contribute to an acceptable end state in Iraq years later.

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<sup>1</sup>This term to describe the war dates to President Bush address to a joint session of Congress on 20 September 2001: "Our War on Terror [emphasis added] begins with al-Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated." This name to describe this world-wide conflict has been a source of criticism in and of itself as being vague in terms of defining the enemy; terrorism is a tactic, not a specific threat. Nevertheless, it remains the universally understood name of the war for which the Bush Administration would propose OIF as a supporting campaign. Bush's words retrieved from Cable News Network, "Transcript of President Bush's Address," 21 September 2001, <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/US/09/20/gen.bush.transcript/> (accessed 15 April 2013).

<sup>2</sup>eMediaMillWorks, "Text of President Bush's 2002 State of the Union Address," *Washington Post*, 29 January 2002, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/onpolitics/transcripts/sou012902.htm> (accessed 15 April 2013).

<sup>3</sup>The Iraqi regime launched an invasion and illegal occupation of its southern neighbor, Kuwait, in August 1990. The Persian Gulf War refers to the successful forced ejection of Iraqi forces from January to March 1991 by a large UN coalition, consisting mostly of personnel from the U.S. The war ended in a ceasefire conditional on Iraq's compliance with a number of resolutions, including consent to UN weapons inspection to verify disarmament of WMD programs. 107th Congress, *Authorization for Use of Military Force against Iraq Resolution of 2002*, Public Law 107-243, October 2002, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-107publ243/pdf/PLAW-107publ243.pdf> (accessed 15 May 2013), 1499.

<sup>4</sup>Frank Barnaby, "Iran-Iraq War: The Use of Chemical Weapons against the Kurds," *Ambio* 17, no. 6 (1988): 407-408.

<sup>5</sup>Jay C. Davis and David E. Kay, "Iraq's Secret Nuclear Weapons Program," *Physics Today* 45, no. 7 (July 1992): 21.

<sup>6</sup>105th Congress, *Iraq Liberation Act of 1998*, Public Law 107-243, 31 October 1988, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-105hr4655eh/pdf/BILLS-105hr4655eh.pdf> (accessed 15 May 2013).

<sup>7</sup>U.S. President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: White House, September 2002), <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf> (accessed 15 May 2013), 1.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 13-23.

<sup>9</sup>107th Congress, 1498-1502.

<sup>10</sup>United Nations Security Council, *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1441*, 8 November 2002, <http://www.iaea.org/newscenter/focus/iaeairaq/iraqres.pdf> (accessed 15 May 2013), 3.

<sup>11</sup>Jessie Lorenz, “The Coalition of the Willing” (Research Paper, Stanford University, Stanford, CA, 5 June 2003), 2-3.

<sup>12</sup>Uchenna Emeagwali and Jeannie Gonzalez, *UN Security Council Deliberations Regarding Iraq, February 14, 2003 through March 26, 2003* (New York: Lawyer’s Committee on Nuclear Policy, July 2003), 19-20.

<sup>13</sup>Raymond W. Copson, *Iraq War: Background and Issues Overview* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 22 April 2003), 3.

<sup>14</sup>Gordon and Trainor, ch. 5.

<sup>15</sup>On 1 March, Turkey’s parliament voted to refuse coalition offensive operations from its territory. This meant that the 4th ID would not be able to invade Iraq from the north. Instead, these forces would have to travel by sea through the Suez Canal and around the Arabian Peninsula. They would not join the war effort until mid-April, after the fall of Baghdad. This situation supported the coalition deception plan about when and how the ground offensive would commence, because the Iraqi regime believed an invasion would not be imminent until at least all coalition land forces were in place in Kuwait. Copson, 12, 27.

<sup>16</sup>Gordon and Trainor, ch. 4.

<sup>17</sup>al-Marashi and Salama, 187, 191-192.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>19</sup>Gordon and Trainor, 205, 307.

<sup>20</sup>Grant T. Hammond, “Myths of the Air War over Serbia,” *Airpower* 14, no. 4 (December 2000): 78-79.

<sup>21</sup>Catherine Dale, *Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, April 2009), <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL34387.pdf> (accessed 15 May 2013), 41.

<sup>22</sup>Gordon and Trainor, ch. 10, 11.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, ch. 6.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, ch. 10.

<sup>25</sup>Copson, 11.

<sup>26</sup>Gordon and Trainor, ch. 13.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, ch. 12.

<sup>28</sup>al-Marashi and Salama, 193.

<sup>29</sup>Gordon and Trainor, ch. 18.

<sup>30</sup>Until that point, it was known as Saddam Hussein International Airport. Dale, 42.

<sup>31</sup>Bing West and Ray L. Smith, *The March Up: Taking Baghdad with the 1st Marine Division* (New York: Bantam Dell Publishing, 2003), 148.

<sup>32</sup>al-Marashi and Salama, 194-195.

<sup>33</sup>Gordon and Trainor, ch. 5.

<sup>34</sup>These forays into Baghdad on 5 and 6 April have come to be known as the “Thunder Runs.” The second operation captured what would be known as the “Green Zone” for the next several years. It had been the seat of the Iraqi Ba’athist regime and would become the seat of first the Coalition Provisional Authority, then of the new Iraqi government in June 2004. *Ibid.*, ch. 19.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, ch. 20.

<sup>36</sup>West and Smith, 234.

<sup>37</sup>Andrew R. Gregory, “1st (UK) Armoured Division in Iraq: January to April 2003,” *Field Artillery Journal* 9 (1 January 2004): 41-43.

<sup>38</sup>Gordon and Trainor, ch. 22.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup>Michael T. Moseley, *Operation Iraqi Freedom—By the Numbers*, GlobalSecurity.org, 30 April 2003, [http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2003/uscentaf\\_oif\\_report\\_30apr2003.pdf](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2003/uscentaf_oif_report_30apr2003.pdf) (accessed 15 May 2013), 3.

<sup>41</sup>Dale, 49.

<sup>42</sup>Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, “Operation Iraqi Freedom,” Icasualties.org, <http://icasualties.org/Iraq/Index.aspx> (accessed 2 May 2013).

<sup>43</sup>Carl Conetta, “Appendix 1: Survey and Assessment of Reported Iraqi Combatant Fatalities in the 2003 War,” in *The Wages of War: Iraqi Combatant and Noncombatant Fatalities in the 2003 Conflict* (Monograph #8, Project for Defense Alternatives, Washington, DC, 20 October 2003), <http://www.comw.org/pda/fulltext/0310rm8ap1.pdf> (accessed 15 May 2013), 2.

<sup>44</sup>Soldiers of the 101st Airborne killed Hussein’s sons, Uday and Qusay, after a six-hour gun battle in Mosul on 22 July. For details, see Quay Barnett, “Operation Tapeworm: Task Force Battle Force Helps Take Down Uday, Qusay Hussein,” *Infantry* 94, no. 6 (November 2005): 28-32. Soldiers of the 4th ID captured Hussein near his hometown of Tikrit on 13 December 2003. The Iraqi government subsequently tried and executed him on 30 December 2006 for crimes against the Iraqi people during his 24-year rule. See Hussein D. Hassan, *Milestones Since the Ouster of Saddam Hussein*, (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 19 June 2007), 3, 5. Neither event appeared to significantly affect the momentum of the insurgency in Iraq.

<sup>45</sup>Copson, 12.

<sup>46</sup>The described force lay-down for stability operations is detailed in Gordon and Trainor, ch. 23.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, ch. 23.

<sup>48</sup>Previous U.S. stability operations, such as those in Bosnia, were arranged that the civil administrator reported to Secretary of State, whose office was the leading agency for missions of this type. Dale, 47-48.

<sup>49</sup>Bayless, 145.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 61-62.

<sup>51</sup>Gordon and Trainor, ch. 6.

<sup>52</sup>See United Nations Security Council, *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1483*, 22 May 2003, <http://www.uncc.ch/resolutio/res1483.pdf> (accessed 15 May 2013); United Nations Security Council, *Nations Security Council Resolution 1500*, 14 August 2003, <http://unami.unmissions.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=IQaWJK119-8%3D&tabid=2836&language=en-US> (accessed 15 May 2013); United Nations Security

Council, *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1511*, 16 October 2003, <http://www.iaea.org/OurWork/SV/Invo/resolutions/res1511.pdf> (accessed 15 May 2013).

<sup>53</sup>Gordon and Trainor, ch. 23.

<sup>54</sup>L. Paul Bremer, *Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 1: De-Ba'athification of Iraqi Society*, Coalition Provisional Authority, 16 May 2003, [http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030516\\_CPAORD\\_1\\_De-Ba\\_athification\\_of\\_Iraqi\\_Society\\_.pdf](http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030516_CPAORD_1_De-Ba_athification_of_Iraqi_Society_.pdf) (accessed 15 May 2013).

<sup>55</sup>Gordon and Trainor, ch. 23.

<sup>56</sup>L. Paul Bremer, *Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 2: Dissolution of Entities*, Coalition Provisional Authority, 23 May 2003, [http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030823\\_CPAORD\\_2\\_Dissolution\\_of\\_Entities\\_with\\_Annex\\_A.pdf](http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030823_CPAORD_2_Dissolution_of_Entities_with_Annex_A.pdf) (accessed 15 May 2013).

<sup>57</sup>al-Marashi and Salama, 201-205.

<sup>58</sup>Gordon and Trainor, ch. 4.

<sup>59</sup>Carter Malkasian, "Counterinsurgency in Iraq: May 2003–January 2010," in *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*, eds. Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2010), 288-290.

<sup>60</sup>Gordon and Trainor, ch. 23.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, ch. 24.

<sup>62</sup>Brian Knowlton, "Top U.S. General in Iraq Sees 'Classical Guerrilla-Type' War," *New York Times*, 16 July 2003.

<sup>63</sup>Iraq Coalition Casualty Count.

<sup>64</sup>Yitzbak Nakash, "The Shi'ites and the Future of Iraq," *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 4 (July/August 2003): 17-26.

<sup>65</sup>Haydar al-Sadr had been a spiritual leader during the 1920 revolt against the British. Haydar's son, Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr, was the Grand Ayatollah of Iraq and founder of the Islamic Dawa Party; Hussein had him tortured and murdered in 1980 for failing to support the Ba'ath Party as ordered. Muqtada's father, Mohammad Mohammad Sadiq al-Sadr, was also a Grand Ayatollah and also murdered on the orders of Hussein in 1999. Muqtada led a quiet life under virtual house arrest until the coalition invasion in 2003. Bayless, 136-141.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, 145-146.

<sup>67</sup>John Sawers, "Iraq Progress Report," in Gordon and Trainor, ch. 24.

<sup>68</sup>Bayless, 146.

<sup>69</sup>Gordon and Trainor, ch. 24.

<sup>70</sup>Sadr City refers to the heavily Shi'a *al-Thawra* district in eastern Baghdad. It was formerly called Saddam City under the old regime and renamed after Muqtada's father. This densely populated area was the single largest source of manpower for the JAM. Bayless, 144-145.

<sup>71</sup>Carter Malkasian, "Signaling Resolve, Democratization, and the First Battle of Fallujah," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 29, no. 3 (June 2006): 425.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, 433-435.

<sup>73</sup>Malkasian, "Counterinsurgency in Iraq," 291.

<sup>74</sup>See Bayless, 146; Malkasian, "Counterinsurgency in Iraq," 291; Agency Group, 09, *Warrant Issued for Anti-Coalition Cleric's Arrest*, 5 April 2004, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/eds/detail?vid=2&sid=6f73eb6a-be6d-4066-8fb5-f9d827a92d84%40sessionmgr114&hid=102&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmU%3d#d b=mtb&AN=32W0313995950> (accessed 6 May 2013).

<sup>75</sup>Al-Khoei, whose father preceded al-Sistani as Grand Ayatollah, had returned to Iraq from exile in order to rally Shi'a Iraqis to the coalition in the days following invasion. On 10 April 2003, upon entering the Imam Ali Mosque without his protective detail, a mob set upon al-Khoei and stabbed him multiple times. Al-Sadr's alleged participation in this varies from having ordering it, to direct participation, and to failure to give sanctuary when, gravely wounded, al-Khoei showed up on his doorstep desperate for aid.

<sup>76</sup>Malkasian, "Signaling Resolve, Democratization, and the First Battle of Fallujah," 432.

<sup>77</sup>Ed Marek, *Black Sunday in Sadr City, 4 April 2004*, TalkingProud.us, 8 November 2004, [http://www.talkingproud.us/Retired/Retired/BlackSundaySadr\\_files/black-sunday-in-sadr-city.pdf](http://www.talkingproud.us/Retired/Retired/BlackSundaySadr_files/black-sunday-in-sadr-city.pdf) (accessed 6 May 2013), 1.

<sup>78</sup>Carol Rosenberg, "Victory in Kut tinged with Bitterness; U.S. Troops who Defeated a Rebellious Shiite Group Learned Their Tours of Duty Were Being Extended," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 11 April 2004.

<sup>79</sup>Malkasian, "Counterinsurgency in Iraq," 291-293.

<sup>80</sup>Malkasian, "Signaling Resolve, Democratization, and the First Battle of Fallujah," 437.



<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 432.

<sup>82</sup>Malkasian, "Counterinsurgency in Iraq," 293.

<sup>83</sup>On 11 March, al-Qaeda successfully bombed a loaded passenger train in Madrid, Spain, killing almost 200 people. Days later, this event contributed to the electoral defeat of the incumbent government that had agreed to provide a brigade for operations in Iraq. The newly elected Socialist government honored campaign promises to break with the coalition and bring its forces home. Dan Tannenbaum, "Bombs, Ballots, and Coercion: The Madrid Bombings, Electoral Politics, and Terrorist Strategy," *Security Studies* 20, no. 3 (July 2011): 303-311.

<sup>84</sup>Malkasian, "Counterinsurgency in Iraq," 291.

<sup>85</sup>Paul S. Frederiksen, Emily J. Fall, and Patrick B. Baetjer, *Iraqi Security and Military Force Developments: A Chronology* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 26 May 2006), 3.

<sup>86</sup>Marek, 8.

<sup>87</sup>For techniques, tactics, and procedures exercised in convoy operations during this period, see Mark V. Lonsdale, "Convoy Security in Semi-Permissive War Zones (Iraq and Afghanistan)," Operational Study, OperationalStudies.com, 2007, [http://www.operationalstudies.com/stability/ConvoySecurity\\_CET.pdf](http://www.operationalstudies.com/stability/ConvoySecurity_CET.pdf) (accessed 15 May 2013).

<sup>88</sup>Malkasian, "Signaling Resolve, Democratization, and the First Battle of Fallujah," 441-449.

<sup>89</sup>"Violence Continues as Sovereignty Approaches," *Middle East Economic Digest* 48, no. 25 (18 June 2004): 2, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/eds/detail?vid=4&sid=ef32dc3d-33d6-4077-a195-1bacd31b1e0c%40sessionmgr11&hid=107&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmU%3d#db=buh&AN=13709231> (accessed 15 May 2013).

<sup>90</sup>Iraq Coalition Casualty Count.

<sup>91</sup>Nuri al-Badran resigned as Interior Minister on 8 April, possibly due to the abysmal performance of Iraqi police in the early days of the rebellion. The Canadian Press, "Interior Minister Resigns at the Suggestion of Top U.S. Official," <http://ehis.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/eds/detail?vid=4&sid=6f73eb6a-be6d-4066-8fb5-f9d827a92d84%40sessionmgr114&hid=102&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmU%3d#db=n5h&AN=MYO154949113304> (accessed 6 May 2013).

<sup>92</sup>Dale, 64.

<sup>93</sup>Hassan, 4.

<sup>94</sup>United Nations Security Council, *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1546*, 8 June 2004, <http://www.uncc.ch/resolutio/res1546.pdf> (accessed 15 May 2013).

<sup>95</sup>Hassan, 4.

<sup>96</sup>Malkasian, “Counterinsurgency in Iraq,” 294-295.

<sup>97</sup>*Ibid.*, 293-296.

<sup>98</sup>Moni Basu, “Deadly Iraq War Ends with Exit of Last U.S. Troops,” CNN.com, 18 December 2011, <http://www.cnn.com/2011/12/17/world/meast/iraq-troops-leave> (accessed 7 May 2013).

## CHAPTER 5

### ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

The British Mesopotamian Campaign and OIF abound with valid points of comparison. This chapter analyzes strategic and operational elements of both campaigns side by side. This thesis does not suggest that these were identical military operations executed by different powers with 90 years in between. Significant differences frame the discussion of what decisions and experiences were similar. Despite these variances, Britain and the U.S. made many parallel errors in the formulation of strategy and campaign design, most of which were informed by erroneous intelligence and overly optimistic assumptions.

#### Contrasting Elements

This section discusses major differences between the British and American campaigns beyond those that exist due to an obvious gap in technology. For instance, the fact that the American-led coalition made far more extensive use of airpower and mechanization in 2003 than the British did during World War I is true but not particularly useful. One distinction that is clear but is still necessary to point out is the nature of the global wars in which each power was engaged. World War I and GWOT both had or have operations taking place on almost every continent. That is where most comparisons must end. World War I involved an unprecedented clash of empires and nation-states with over 16 million military personnel and civilians dead at its conclusion. The major powers translated large portions of the world's industry, manpower, and wealth into destructive force. The war had terrible consequences for not only those who served but

also for the overwhelming majority of civilians in participating countries. With regard to GWOT, even the highest involvement of the U.S., all of its allies, and all of its adversaries was never a fraction of this scale in terms of personnel under arms, utilization of economies, or casualties. The impact of this war on the average U.S. civilian is relatively marginal. The citizens are not subject to conscription, rationing, or even higher taxes. One bumper sticker, usually on vehicles belonging to military personnel reads, “America is not at war. The troops are at war. America is at the mall.” Finally, World War I permanently changed the political landscape of the planet, including the collapse of four major imperial powers. Though operations continue to this day, GWOT will not likely cause global consequences along the same order.

The next significant point of divergence is the relative strategic effort of both powers. For Britain in World War I, the Mesopotamia Campaign was never more than a sideshow to the Western Front. Even within the Middle Eastern theater, General Allenby’s campaign had priority as evidenced by the fact that the War Council transferred two divisions from Mesopotamia to Palestine (chapter 2). By contrast, from 2003 until at least 2008, OIF was the strategic main effort of the U.S. During these years the average number of American personnel on the ground in Iraq varied between approximately 130,000 and 160,000.<sup>1</sup> For the same period, American troop strength in Afghanistan was around 30,000. On at least one occasion, President Bush referred to the campaign in Iraq as a “central front” of GWOT.<sup>2</sup>

Another distinguishing factor was the rates and trends with which Britain and the U.S. deployed forces for combat in Iraq. Britain initiated the campaign in 1914 with a single brigade and built up to two divisions by early 1915. In addition, divisions did not

deploy to theater until after the 6th Division was already in extreme danger. The Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force reached its top strength in fall 1917, three years into the campaign. Quite the opposite, OIF began in March 2003 with the largest amount of support it would ever have. The U.S. Third Army had approximately 250,000 coalition troops in Iraq at the fall of Baghdad, and force levels would only decrease from that point. Even “surge” levels in 2008 never exceeded about 158,000, if one does not count the growth of Iraqi security forces.<sup>3</sup>

Dramatic differences characterize the two regimes that controlled Iraq prior to the respective invasions. The Ottoman Turks were ethnically distinct from the Arabs (and Kurds) whom they ruled in the region now known as Iraq, but the centuries-old Ottoman administration was largely typified by incompetence and corruption rather than deliberate cruelty.<sup>4</sup> Despite exaggerated British claims to the contrary, no major nationalist movement existed in Mesopotamia waiting to overthrow the Ottoman masters.<sup>5</sup> Rebellions that occurred were usually a function of tribal and religious sect independence rather than any sense of Arab or regional identity. In general, the people of the Euphrates and Tigris valleys were not yearning to be “liberated” from the Ottomans in any sense larger than Indians or any other number of subject peoples yearned to be free of the British Empire. The Ba’athist Regime however, was totalitarian and brutally oppressive by almost any standard. Even those who opposed OIF in 2003 did not dispute that Hussein and sons imposed their rule by uncountable acts of torture, rape as a weapon, extrajudicial execution, and other barbarous acts against those who opposed them.<sup>6</sup>

The motivations of Britain in 1914 and the U.S. in 2003 are also not the same. Both powers claimed to be acting in the best interest of the indigenous people, and

according to Middle East historian Peter Sluglett oil was a primary motivator driving both campaigns.<sup>7</sup> The British initial interest in Mesopotamia was securing its naval fuel source at Abadan as described in chapter 2. However, open discussions of colonizing Mesopotamia with Indian immigrants as well as the last-minute expedition to seize the Mosul oil fields in 1918 suggest that British leadership was also interested in using the war as an excuse to grab land. Neither were American motivations entirely altruistic. In accordance with the strategy discussed in chapter 4, the liberation of the Iraqi people was method for imposing democratic values on the Middle East and intimidating U.S. adversaries. However, the facts that the CPA dissolved as promised in 2004, coalition troops departed in 2011, and the U.S. has not maintained control of Iraq's petroleum industry all suggest that OIF was not about securing a source of oil, despite persistent accusations to the contrary over the course of the campaign.

At the operational level, both campaigns invaded Iraq by remarkably different means. The Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force made optimal use of the rivers for transportation as the local people had done for thousands of years. The British built roads and rail to supplement their logistics, but shallow-draft boats were the primary means to move supplies and reinforcements even in 1920. River craft also provided mobile fire support and a means to command and control, since radios in those days were extremely heavy. In 2003, the coalition's primary method of maneuver was the use of mechanized and motorized assets, but it also exercised helicopter and airborne assaults to a limited extent. Military planners gave very little consideration to using or controlling the rivers, viewing them more as obstacles to be negotiated rather than potential lines of communication.<sup>8</sup> While this had little if any impact on the conventional phase of OIF, the

absence of coalition boats later played a role in aiding the insurgency. Iraqis never stopped viewing the rivers as a means of transportation, and insurgents used boats to bypass coalition road checkpoints. Small river islands also made convenient hiding places for weapons caches. The coalition did not begin to seriously address this gap in security until early 2006.<sup>9</sup>

### Strategic Parallels

The key similarity between both campaigns that informs many other parallels is faulty intelligence and erroneous assumptions. In the early days of World War I, the British proceeded based on assumptions that the Ottoman Empire would eventually enter the conflict on the side of the Central Powers. Accordingly, Churchill seized two of their ships and provided Germany with an opportunity to gain Ottoman favor by providing suitable replacements (chapter 2). Therefore, Britain may have unnecessarily provoked conflict, much to Germany's strategic benefit.<sup>10</sup> The Gallipoli, Palestine, and Mesopotamian Campaigns tied down more than one million British and Commonwealth personnel in the Middle East at a relatively small cost to Germany. British intelligence in 1914 with respect to the Ottoman troop buildup near Basra was completely inaccurate. The Ottomans made no attempt to reinforce Mesopotamia until after the British invaded.

OIF was also replete with intelligence failures that influenced key assumptions and impacted campaign planning. The most infamous of these was related to Iraq's alleged WMD programs. Given Hussein's previous use of chemical weapons against Iran and the Kurds and his willful obstruction of disarmament agreements for 12 years, the Bush Administration as well as the political leadership of many other countries assumed that Hussein maintained active programs and stockpiles. Any intelligence that supported

this assumption was valid; any that did not must have been part of an Iraqi deception plan. The eventual failure to uncover evidence of active WMD programs or functional stockpiles suggests that in one regard the U.S. may have also provoked an unnecessary war.

Intelligence about Iraq in 2003 also erroneously indicated that Iraq's regular armed forces would capitulate and the Shi'a population would likely rise in rebellion against Hussein when the coalition invaded. Further, assumptions that the Hussein regime would sabotage Iraqi infrastructure were invalid. These fears contributed to the decision to execute an early ground war, but the regime never intended any such acts of self-destruction.<sup>11</sup> Related to this failure was the absence of intelligence about the poor maintenance of Iraq's infrastructure. Conditions in some Rumaylah oil facilities were so bad that initial survey teams thought the regime had succeeded in sabotaging them, but Iraqi workers confirmed that this was the normal state of equipment. Baghdad's electrical grid was in such disrepair that when the chief Iraqi engineer shut down a plant for safety reasons the entire system collapsed. A lack of accurate intelligence on these matters contributed to overly optimistic assumptions on how quickly Iraqis would be able to resume self-governance and normal lives after the coalition removed Hussein's regime.

Both campaigns suffered from an unintended expansion of mission that at best did not support strategic goals and at worst detracted from them. British operations near Basra in 1914 were supposed to secure the APOC facilities and pipe line. That fuel supplied the Royal Navy and therefore, the blockade against Germany throughout the war, so the campaign was initially in accordance with strategic objectives. However, the British met this end by capturing Qurna and repulsing the Ottoman counterattack at



Shaiba in 1915. Every step taken beyond this only distracted from and reduced the strategic main effort in Europe. According to World War I historian Adrian Gilbert:

Of all the campaigns fought by the British, the Mesopotamian adventure was the least productive . . . The only true significant result of the campaign was that it tied down a small number of Turks and facilitated Allenby's advance from Damascus. When the vast numbers of troops sucked into "Mespot" are set against the desperate shortages of soldiers on the Western Front in 1918, the whole business resembled an almost criminal waste of resources and lives.<sup>12</sup>

This assessment does not even take into account what the post-war administration of Iraq cost the British, including the consequences of the 1920 Revolt (chapter 3).

OIF was similarly detached from strategic ends desired in at least one respect. Since the beginning of the campaign, many politicians and critics of the war have argued that Iraq was a distraction from more important aspects of GWOT, the campaign in Afghanistan in particular. For instance, Senator Barack Obama, during his 2008 run for President, said, "As should have been apparent to President Bush . . . the central front in the War on Terror is not Iraq, and it never was."<sup>13</sup> Obama advocated instead a renewed focus on al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Opinions such as this often vary depending on one's political leanings. However, the position that OIF contributed to unnecessary enmity between the U.S. and some of its allies is less controversial. Chapter Four listed two ways from the 2002 *National Security Strategy* for which the Bush Administration argued OIF was a supporting campaign: eliminating a threat posed by a rogue regime to unleash WMDs and address the underlying issues of militant Islam by establishing representative government, rule of law, and free market values. Other ways however, included strengthening of existing alliances and developing agendas for cooperative action with the other main centers of global power.<sup>14</sup> When the U.S. sought a final UNSC resolution authorizing force in Iraq, France and Russia threatened to veto. In

all likelihood, China would have done so as well. Germany, which was not a permanent UNSC member with veto power, remained adamantly opposed to the use of force for the present. At that point the Bush Administration declared the UN to be irrelevant and went to war with the coalition that it had in place.

Russia and China may not have voted for such a resolution, whatever the circumstances, but the opposition of France and Germany should have given the U.S. pause. As members of NATO, France and Germany were allies with whom the U.S. was supposed to be strengthening ties as a strategic means for GWOT. Instead of honoring their concerns by giving inspections more time, the U.S. showed contempt for both the UN and NATO by executing the war immediately. When the coalition never found evidence of active WMD programs in Iraq, this action appeared all the more arrogant to the world, notwithstanding the Iraqi regime's other confirmed crimes against humanity. In fairness, however, for the U.S. to have delayed action in accordance with French and German wishes is much easier to write in retrospect than it would have been to effect in March of 2003. A huge force had built up in Kuwait, the Persian Gulf, and other bases in the Middle East. It could not sit idly in place while inspections and negotiations carried on indefinitely. At some point, it would have had to make war or go home.

An expansive mission with insufficient forces to accomplish it also affected OIF as surely as it had the Mesopotamian Campaign. In 1915, though originally detailed with protecting the APOC facilities, the 6th Division marched toward Baghdad and its eventual fate at Kut. In 2003, coalition forces captured their objectives in Iraq only to face the unpleasant reality that the mission was only beginning. During the buildup for war, retired and active-duty generals warned the Bush Administration that in Iraq, to use

a cliché, winning the war would be much easier than winning the peace. War games supervised by the former head of Central Command, retired Marine General Anthony Zinni, indicated at least 380,000 ground troops would be necessary, mostly for post-war stability operations.<sup>15</sup> Testifying before Congress in February 2003, U.S. Army Chief of Staff Eric Shinseki gave his opinion that “several hundred thousand” ground troops would be required to maintain security in Iraq, based on his peacekeeping experience in Bosnia.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, OIF proceeded with far fewer land forces, and due to erroneous assumptions already discussed, the Bush Administration believed that Iraq would stabilize with even less personnel than these. Plans were in progress to reduce CJTF-7 down to two divisions, about 40,000 troops, when Bremer requested a halt to withdrawals on account of the growing insurgency in the summer of 2003.

One last strategic parallel is the lack of unity of effort both between civil departments of the respective governments and between the civil and military administrations in Iraq. For the British, severe disagreements between the India Office and the Foreign and War Offices marred constructive debate on how to proceed in Iraq after the end of World War I. When the cabinet in London did reach a consensus more in line with the Foreign Office, Acting Civil Administrator Wilson, who believed direct British rule was the optimal course of action, purposely undermined some of his instructions. The U.S. Departments of State and Defense likewise failed to collaborate in 2003. The Department of Defense managed to usurp State’s traditional role as the lead agency for stability operations.<sup>17</sup> To a certain extent, the CPA and CJTF-7 never had the State Department’s best efforts in Iraq after that, and acrimony persisted between the agencies.

Discord and a lack of cooperation also characterized civil-military relations. Wilson and General Haldane were rarely of the same mind in early 1920. In some cases, Haldane was openly contemptuous of Wilson's concerns: "the [Acting] Civil Commissioner still says he is anxious regarding the situation. I am not and never have been . . . He has not been opposed to Germans for four and a half years."<sup>18</sup> Their immediate superiors were in opposing agencies: Wilson reported to the India Office, and Haldane to the War Office. This meant that any disputes took longer to resolve. The lack of common effort between Wilson and Haldane contributed to delays in troop reinforcements and unnecessary friction during the revolt. In 2004, relations between Ambassador Bremer and General Sanchez were not much better. The U.S. Department of Defense had established a direct-support relationship between CJTF-7 and the CPA, but Sanchez ultimately decided the best manner to provide for that support. Unlike British civil-military relations in Iraq in 1920, Bremer and Sanchez did have a single authority, the Secretary of Defense, to settle disputes. Nevertheless, no single integrated civil-military strategy for Iraq existed as late as October 2003.<sup>19</sup> Bremer would make central decisions, such as disbanding the Iraqi armed forces, without military consultation. Journalist Tom Ricks described the relationship between Bremer and Sanchez as an absence of "generosity of spirit."<sup>20</sup>

### Operational Parallels

Certain tactical moves by British and American generals in Mesopotamia and OIF respectively were counterproductive to political aims. A campaign is only successful to the extent that it facilitates national strategy, not through the accomplishment of military objectives alone. In 1915, General Townshend led his division to a number of victories

on the way to Baghdad. His maneuver east of Kut was nothing short of brilliant. Even at Ctesiphon he had forced superior enemy forces into withdrawal before his own brigades culminated with less than half strength remaining. However, each victory made the expedition as a whole more vulnerable, thus endangering the eastern flank of the APOC pipeline. The 6th Division at Kut was not able to save itself, but it did hold out long enough to allow sufficient reinforcements to arrive in theater and prevent the Ottomans from exploiting their success. Field Marshal Robertson's order of 30 September 1916 seemed to bring military objectives back in alignment with strategic ends, but General Maude went back on the offensive as soon as he was able. His victories at Kut, Baghdad, and after did much to increase the morale of his soldiers as well as his own prestige, but they had no appreciable impact on events in Europe. If the German 1918 Spring Offensive had been successful, holding Baghdad would have meant very little.

During the conventional phase of OIF, certain elements of campaign design were counterproductive to the vision that the U.S. had for post-Hussein Iraq. The political objective of a viable, representative state was predicated on such factors as intact security forces, civil service, and infrastructure. The Third Army's plan centered on taking Baghdad as soon as possible, not on isolating elements of the Iraqi regular army to capture them whole. Air strikes targeted their command and control nodes. The speed of the coalition advance left those units not directly engaged with no cohesiveness and no guidance from higher commands. The best course of action for Iraqi soldiers under such circumstances was to take off their uniforms and go home. As a result, the army disintegrated rather than surrendering or returning to the barracks. The result was much the same for the civil service. Additionally, air strikes also had destroyed those key

networks that were not already crippled from years of neglect. For example, Ninth Air Force had targeted the telephone exchanges in order to cut the regime off from the rest of the country. Post-war planning assumed a relatively unbroken state, but the conventional campaign shattered essential elements of it.

Another trend between both campaigns was the initial acceptance of vulnerable lines of communication. Despite Townshend's protests, Nixon ordered him to push the 6th Division beyond reasonable lengths of supply in 1915. Because of the dearth of manpower over tremendous distances few troops were available to garrison depots and fell prey to Arab tribes loyal to the Ottomans as well as criminal elements. When Maude took command, more than half of the forces at his disposal were involved in securing lines of communication from Basra to the four divisions at the front. More of the same occurred in 1920. Insurgents attacked British supply columns with abandon until Haldane dedicated tremendous effort toward fortifications, such as had been effective during his experience in the Second Boer War, and modifying traveling formations to adjust to insurgent tactics.

In late March 2003, V Corps and I MEF had to suspend offensive operations for two days. The poor weather made for a convenient cover, but the reality was that the 3d ID and 1st Marine Division moved faster than logistics trains could effectively supply them. Furthermore, as in 1915, few spare ground combat units were available for dedicated route security. This coupled with the distances involved left resupply convoys vulnerable to attack by Saddam Fidayin. The operational pause allowed ground commanders to re-evaluate the threat and mitigate risk along the lines of communication accordingly. In April 2004, insurgents again found the most success in targeting coalition

convoys. The widespread fighting of “Black Sunday” in Sadr City began with such an attack on a routine convoy from the 1st Cavalry Division. Insurgent targeting of I MEF logistics assets was causing problems for Marines fighting in Fallujah even before CJTF-7 ordered a halt to offensive operations. Increasingly complex attacks involved 20 or more insurgents exercising “combined arms” tactics of a kind, with IEDs, machine guns, and rocket-propelled grenades. Like the British in 1920, the coalition had to make serious adjustments to protect its lines of communication before counterattacking against areas in revolt.

#### Civil and Local Security Force Considerations

This final section is connected to both strategic and operational issues but belongs in a category of its own. Both campaigns proceeded from an assumption that the local population would greet them as liberators.<sup>21</sup> Faulty intelligence again drove some of this, but mostly it was an unhealthy level of optimism; politicians and generals alike simply believed what they wanted to believe. During the Mesopotamian Campaign, British leaders underestimated the pull of religious and tribal affiliation. Even Arabs who despised the Turks were just as likely to take up arms against foreign unbelievers in their lands. In 2003 this was again true, but American leaders also underestimated the loyalty that Iraqis might have to their country, even if they hated their government; how intimidated Iraqis were to obey the regime; and the persistent sense of betrayal felt by many Shi’a Iraqis from 1991.

Though they faced comparable problems controlling the population and winning them over, the American situation was arguably worse. The British did not have the advantage of hatred for Hussein’s brutal regime to win over the populace, but they also

did not have the same severe problems with restoring essential services. Baghdad in 1917 was not nearly as populated as in 2003, and the people were not as dependent on electricity, sewage, and telephones. For the same reason, the British had a less difficult time with security. Baghdad's population in 1908 was approximately 140,000.<sup>22</sup> Based on the table of organization of World War I British divisions, Maude had about 60,000 troops, the preponderance of whom were infantry, to secure the city—a force-to-population ratio of roughly 1:4, even if the inhabitants had grown as high as 250,000 by 1917. Despite this, Gertrude Bell reported high amounts of looting along with cheering crowds.<sup>23</sup> In 2003, the population of Baghdad was about 6,000,000.<sup>24</sup> The 3d ID and 1st Marine Division had no more than 40,000 personnel between them (with a much lower proportion of infantry), generating a ratio of 1:150. Looting was so excessive that U.S. troops had to ignore most of it and guard only selected sites, such as banks, hospitals, and government offices.<sup>25</sup>

Both Britain and the U.S. were slow to appreciate the importance of organizing competent local security forces until the respective revolts in 1920 and 2004. Britain had been gradually building local levies and constabularies since 1914, but the civil administration either failed to consider or simply refused to recruit former Ottoman officers and soldiers. When the uprising began in June 1920, the overwhelming number of Iraqis with military experience were on the side of the insurgency. The performance of the levies was abysmal; many of them not only refused to fight but actually turned their weapons on the British in cases where the insurgents appeared to be winning. The American experience in 2004 was parallel. ICDC units mutinied at Fallujah and deserted en masse all over Iraq.



In each case, after suppressing the respective revolts, building a suitable Iraqi army capable of assuming responsibility for security became a top effort. The British placed Feisal on the throne in part because of his credibility as a military leader during the Arab Revolt. They also actively recruited from the former Ottoman ranks, including men who had taken up arms in the 1920 revolt. Beginning in the summer of 2004, Multi-National Force–Iraq made building an Iraqi army (and later the police) the main effort for security operations. Once the CPA transferred authority to the Interim Iraqi Government, the U.S. quietly set aside its objections to having former Republican Guard, Saddam Fidayin, and even JAM in the new army. Every man at arms with a stake in the new government was one less engaging in attacks against the coalition and civilians. At operations in Najaf, Samarra, and Fallujah in 2004, Iraqi units (mostly with Kurdish and Shi'a Arab soldiers at that time) played a key supporting role. Eventually, the Iraqi Army incorporated significant numbers of Sunni Arabs as well and took the lead in offensive operations with the Americans in advisory and fire-support roles.

### Conclusions

This thesis has discussed the British Mesopotamian Campaign of World War I and Operation Iraqi Freedom of the Global War on Terror. The British executed conventional operations in modern-day Iraq against the Ottoman Empire from 1914 to 1918. The purpose was to provide security for the Royal Navy's primary source of fuel and to a lesser extent fix Ottoman forces to keep them from acting decisively in other theaters. The British mission in Mesopotamia expanded well beyond its initial purposes without the requisite increase in forces to ensure its accomplishment. Disaster followed, the British had to detail even more divisions to rectify the situation. Instead of restricting

the options of the Ottoman military, the Mesopotamian Campaign was of inadvertent benefit to Imperial Germany, which with very little support to the Ottomans was able to effectively tie down multiple divisions of the British army in the Middle East. The British assumed responsibility for administering a nascent Iraqi state, but their narrative of coming as liberators never took root with the people. A rebellion against the British civil and military authorities in 1920 was extremely costly in lives, time, and treasure. The modern state of Iraq is a creature of the indirect rule that the British effected to ensure that they would never have to put down another revolt along that scale.

In 2003, the U.S. and its coalition partners invaded and occupied Iraq, overthrowing the totalitarian regime of Saddam Hussein. American political leadership, in the context of a world-spanning fight against transnational terrorism, envisioned that the U.S. and its allies would be more secure with Hussein gone and a thriving democracy in its place. Post-invasion difficulties with restoring governance, a viable economy, essential services, and security defied all planning assumptions. In late summer, coalition forces were embattled in a classic guerilla war against Sunni Arab insurgents who had lost their privileged status in society with the fall of Hussein. By spring 2004, Iraq was in open rebellion as the insurgency spread into the ranks of the Shi'a. Once again, an army that intended to liberate found itself labeled as an occupier.

This chapter has discussed a number of parallels between the British and American experiences of invading, occupying, and administering Iraq. However, uncovering those elements of the British experience that would have been useful to political and military planners of OIF is the purpose of this thesis. Not every coincident factor could have provided a constructive precedent. For instance, this thesis finds that

there were aspects of both campaigns that were not aligned with overall strategic ends desired. These aspects are interesting but not necessarily of use. First, every campaign should, by definition, translate tactical military victories into political goals. This was not exclusive to the Mesopotamia Campaign, and it is unlikely that OIF campaign planners would have amended their work in 2003 because of British manpower shortages on the Western Front in 1918. With that in mind, this thesis finds that with a proper historical study, the following specific precedents of the Mesopotamian Campaign could have influenced OIF planning at the strategic and operational levels:

1. The Iraqi people may not greet you as liberators. From 1914 to 1918, some locals were willing to work with the British, but many were not. During the British advance up the Tigris, non-aligned tribes attacked the flanks of the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force. In 1920, a large segment of the population rose up against British rule. Leaders must assume that some elements of the populace will be hostile and plan post-war security operations accordingly.
2. A competent Iraqi military is the key force-multiplier for an early victory in the security line of effort and an eventual coalition withdrawal. The British failure to immediately bring former members of the Ottoman Army into the fold was a terrible mistake. Plan the ground campaign around isolating Iraqi Army units, not merely seizing terrain. Capturing soldiers for future utility under a new government is better than destroying them and far better than bypassing and allowing them to melt into the population. Training a new army from scratch may prove much more difficult than converting one to your side.

3. Large numbers of light infantry forces are most valuable for security operations. By 1920, the British reduced their garrison in Iraq far below what was necessary to control the country. Tanks, armored fighting vehicles, and aircraft will give you the firepower advantage to take almost any physical objective. However, for holding and patrolling terrain in urban environments there is no substitute for dismounted infantry.
4. The civil and military elements of post-war administration must have unity of effort. In 1920, the relationship between Wilson and Haldane was corrosive toward the end state that they both desired. If the civil governor and military commander are not pulling in the same direction, then the lines of effort for stability will suffer. The chain of command must be clear; the civil authority should be in charge with tactical command of military forces. However, the governor must seek out and heed the counsel of the military on matters affecting security and keep the military informed on intentions and progress with respect to governance, economics, and essential services.
5. Plan to secure lines of communication in advance. Iraqi irregular forces struck at the vulnerability of British supply lines during the conventional campaign and during the 1920 uprising. The British could make no progress toward military objectives either during the conventional phase or the 1920 uprising until they addressed this gap in security. However, combat maneuver units might not be available for dedicated route security. Combat support personnel must be prepared to execute sound convoy operations in terms of formations

and immediate actions to attacks. Air assets are also a force-multiplier in route security.

6. The rivers are a method of transportation, not an obstacle. The British planned to control the Tigris and Euphrates from the beginning because they were a necessary means of advance. The coalition does not need to use rivers to attain its military objective, but it must still deny their use to enemy irregular forces. Sufficient numbers of armed small craft and personnel trained in riverine operations will be necessary.

In summary, military professionals can gain value in current operational planning from studying the successes and failures of previous campaigns. This is especially true when such operations are to take place on similar physical and human terrain on which another military has significant experience. While this statement seems obvious, our American repetition of others' prior mistakes suggests that we either do not study or casually dismiss the experiences of those who have gone before us. Indeed, my perception is that with regard to Afghanistan we did not begin to seriously examine the Soviet, British, and Hellenic counterinsurgency campaigns until we were already deeply mired in one of our own. The British Mesopotamian Campaign represents another such failed opportunity to learn from the history of others.

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<sup>1</sup>Amy Belasco, *Troop Levels in the Afghan and Iraq Wars, FY2001-FY2012: Cost and Other Potential Issues* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2 July 2009), [www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R40682.pdf](http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R40682.pdf) (accessed 15 May 2013), 9.

<sup>2</sup>Donna Miles, "Bush Calls Iraq Central Front in Terror War, Vows Victory," *American Forces Press Service*, 6 October 2005, <http://www.defense.gov/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=18145> (accessed 15 May 2013).

<sup>3</sup>Belasco, summary.

<sup>4</sup>At least this was mostly the case for Arabs and Jews living in the Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul *vilayets*. The Christian population of the Ottoman Empire, such as the Armenians, would likely contest the notion that the Ottomans were not deliberately cruel and oppressive in general.

<sup>5</sup>Peter Sluglett, "Imperial Myopia: Some Lessons from Two Invasions of Iraq," *Middle East Journal* 62, no. 4 (Autumn 2008): 594-596.

<sup>6</sup>For a comprehensive list of the regime's many alleged crimes against its neighbors and humanity understood as of fall 2002, see Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *Saddam Hussein: Crimes and Human Rights Abuses*, A report on the human cost of Saddam's policies by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (London, UK: Foreign and Commonwealth Office, November 2002).

<sup>7</sup>Sluglett, 605-609.

<sup>8</sup>Col Stephen Brown, USMC (Retired), former head of C35 (Future Operations for U.S. Third Army during OIF, interview with author, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 11 March 2013; COL Kevin Benson, U.S. Army (Retired), former head of C5 (Plans), interview with author, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 14 March 2013.

<sup>9</sup>Amy Clamper, "River War," *Seapower* 49, no. 2 (February 2006): 10-12.

<sup>10</sup>Sluglett, 597.

<sup>11</sup>In 1991, the Iraqi armed forces destroyed much of Kuwait's oil infrastructure during its retreat. However, the Ba'athist regime was truly convinced that it would defeat the coalition and, hence, refused to damage anything it believed it would need after the war was over, such as bridges, power plants, and the oil industry. Gordon and Trainor, ch. 9, 10, 18.

<sup>12</sup>Gilbert, 181.

<sup>13</sup>Cable News Network, "Obama Calls Iraq War a 'Dangerous Distraction,'" 15 July 2008, <http://www.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/07/15/obama.iraq/> (accessed 8 May 2013).

<sup>14</sup>U.S. President, 5-7, 25-28.

<sup>15</sup>Gordon and Trainor, ch. 3.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, ch. 6.

<sup>17</sup>Dodge, ix-xii.

<sup>18</sup>Wilson's service during World War I was exclusively in India and Mesopotamia. Haldane had served on the Western Front, commanding at the division and

corps levels. Consequently, Haldane believed Wilson did not understand a real war and was dismissive about Wilson's assessment of the escalating violence. Townshend, *Desert Hell*, ch. 8.

<sup>19</sup>Ricks, 179-180.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid, 180.

<sup>21</sup>Judith Yaphne, "War and Occupation in Iraq: What Went Right? What Could Go Wrong?" *Middle East Journal* 57, no. 3 (Summer 2003): 385, 392.

<sup>22</sup>Population estimate from 1908 by John Gordon Lorimer, *Gazeteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia, Volume II: Geographical and Statistical* (Calcutta, India: Superintendent Government Printing, 1908), 201.

<sup>23</sup>Bell, 12, 31-32.

<sup>24</sup>GeoHive, "Iraq Population Statistics," <http://www.geohive.com/cntry/iraq.aspx> (accessed 9 May 2013).

<sup>25</sup>Gordon and Trainor, ch. 25.

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